

DragonLance®

Official Game Adventure

DRAGON DAWN

BY DEBORAH CHRISTIAN



First in a fantastic series of adventures set in
Krynn's lost continent of Taladas!

IMPORTANT NPCs

Derry Althen (1st level female human fighter)

ST 7, IN 14, WS 12, DX 15, CN 9, CH 16; AC 6; HD WA1; hp 7; AL NG; THAC0 20.

Weapon Proficiencies: sling, light crossbow, staff.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: animal lore (14), horsemanship (15), hunting (11), tracking (12).

Languages: Auric, Kothian (14), Hoor (14).

Although normally unarmored, Derry wears oversized ring mail (scavenged from a guard's cast-offs) if she thinks she might meet danger in the woods. She carries 24 +1 bullets for use in her sling, although she uses stones for commonplace targets. Her greatest prize, a present from Eldic, is a *potion of animal control* which affects mammals and avians. She carries it hidden in a pouch beneath her tunic.

Tavin Longspear (6th level human dragon knight)

ST 15, IN 12, WS 13, DX 9, CN 12, CH 17; AC 5; MV 12; HD WA6, hp 36; AL N; THAC0 15 (14 with lance).

Weapon Proficiencies: medium lance (specialized), spear, heavy crossbow (specialized: 1/2).

Nonweapon Proficiencies: dragon riding (13), hunting (12), animal lore (12), fire-building (12), mountaineering, weather sense (12).

Languages: Auric, Copper Dragon (12), Hoor (12).

Armor: *studded leather* +2, leather helm.

Weapons: *medium lance* +1 (in dragon lair), spear, heavy crossbow, dagger, 5 +1 crossbow bolts, 24 normal crossbow bolts.

Magical Items: *potion of dragon sight*, *boots of striding and springing*.

Special Abilities: immune to dragon awe; immune to dragon fear; he has no penalty due to flight when using crossbow or lance from dragon-back.

Gabus (young adult copper dragon)

AC -2; MV 9, FI 30 (C), Jp 3; HD 13, hp 78; #AT 3 + specials (snatch up to L size; kick 1d6 + 5 feet; wing buffet 1d6 + 5 hp); Dmg 1d6 + 5/1d6 + 5/5d4 + 5; AL CG; IN high; Size G (45' body, 35' tail); THAC0 8 (+2 on claw attack if diving); SA *acid breath* (70' long x 5' x 5'; Dmg 10d6 + 5, save for half damage), gas breath which slows victim for 15 minutes (30' long x 20' x 20'), can breathe once every 3 rds; fear within 10 yds.—save vs. petrification or fight at -2 (to hit and dmg) (but 5 main dragon hunters immune to this fear because of prolonged exposure to dragons); SD MR 10%.

Inherent powers: *spider climb* (on stone), *neutralize poison* (three times a day), *stone shape* (twice daily); immune to acid.

Spells (cast at 12th level):

1st: *detect magic*.

3rd: *flame arrow*.

Nonweapon proficiencies: ancient history (16), appraising (14).

Languages: Copper Dragon, Auric (14), Marak Kender (14), Bronze Dragon (14), Hitehkel Gnomish (14).

Anishta (Female Human, Level 7 Cleric (priestess of Hith))

ST 13, IN 13, WS 17, DX 17, CN 10, CH 12; AC -1; MV 12; HD P7, hp 43; AL LE; THAC0 16.

Weapon Proficiencies: flail, horseman's flail, mace.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: horsemanship (20), animal handling (16), ancient history (12), weather sense (16), hunting (16).

Languages: Thenolian, Auric (13), Sesk (13).

Spells (5/5/3/1):

1st: *bless*, *detect good*, *command*, *cure light wounds*, *protection from good*

2nd: *enthral*, *silence 15'*, *wyvern watch*, *spiritual hammer*, *obscurement*

3rd: *animate dead* (x2), *feign death*

4th: *spell immunity*

Anishta wears *splint mail* +2. She wields a *mace* +2, engraved with the symbol of Hith. This weapon, called Shadowcaster, can *create darkness* in a 15' radius once per day. Whoever holds the weapon is unaffected by the magical darkness, and can see normally

within that area of effect. In addition, the priestess has an *iridescent spindle ioun stone* which sustains her without breathing. She uses this to protect against the breath attacks of certain dragons. Anishta has a scroll which contained several *pass without trace* and *hallucinatory terrain* spells; two each remain on the scroll.

Tekolo (Hurdu, Level 6 Fighter)

ST 18/82, IN 9, WS 11, DX 12, CN 16, CH 8; AC 6; MV 12; HD WA6, hp 45; Dmg by weapon (+4 for ST); Size L (7'); AL NE; THAC0 13 (includes ST +2).

Weapon Proficiencies: sling, warhammer (specialized: 3/2), dagger, spear (specialized: 3/2).

Nonweapon Proficiencies: hunting (10), set snares (11), endurance (16), mountaineering.

Languages: Hurdu, Thenolian (9).

Tekolo wears no armor. He carries a *war hammer* +2, dagger, sling, and spear. Around his neck he wears a *good luck* talisman of bone and feathers, which will bestow a +1 modifier to his next three saving throws (after that the talisman is exhausted and no longer effective). This warrior wears a golden arm band on his left biceps; it is a *phylactery of pure water* (XP 1,000), enabling the wearer to *purify water* as the 1st-level priest spell *purity food and drink*. The device holds 23 charges.

The lizard man stands nearly 7' tall, weighs 350 pounds, and has a natural armor class of 6 due to his thick, scaled hide. If necessary he can bite with his fangs, inflicting 1d6 points of damage. If he does not attack with a weapon during a combat round, Tekolo may instead lash out with his five-foot-long tail. This is a bludgeoning attack inflicting 1d8 points of damage.

Pollip (Female Dwarf, Level 6 Thief)

ST 14, IN 11, WS 11, DX 17, CN 13, CH 12; AC 2; HD R6, hp 24; AL LE; THAC0 18.

Weapon Proficiencies: dagger, staff, short sword.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: appraising (11), set snares (16), mining (8).

Languages: Scorned Dwarvish, Thenolian (11), Auric (11).

Thief Abilities: PP 50%, OL 55%, FRT 60%, MS 60%, HS 25%, DN 15%, CW 65%, RL 10%.

Pollip wears *studded leather armor* +1 and carries a wooden shield. She carries *oil of ethereality* and a small *bag of holding* in which she has collected 2,000 stl worth of gemstones and jewelry from dragon hoards. In addition, the thief has been stashing bits of dragon treasure along the way, and keeps a map marking these locations in her bag.

Kohver (Half-ogre, Level 5 Cleric (Ogre Shaman))

ST 17, IN 12, WS 12, DX 8, CN 15, CH 7; AC 3; MV 12; HD P5, hp 40; Dmg by weapon (+1 for ST); AL NE; THAC0 17 (includes ST +1).

Weapon Proficiencies: club, warhammer, spear.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: herbalism (10), direction sense (13), weather sense (11), leather-working (12).

Languages: Abaquan, Thenolian (12), Sesk (12), Auric (12).

Spells (3/3/1):

1st: *invisibility to animals*, *endure heat*, *entangle*

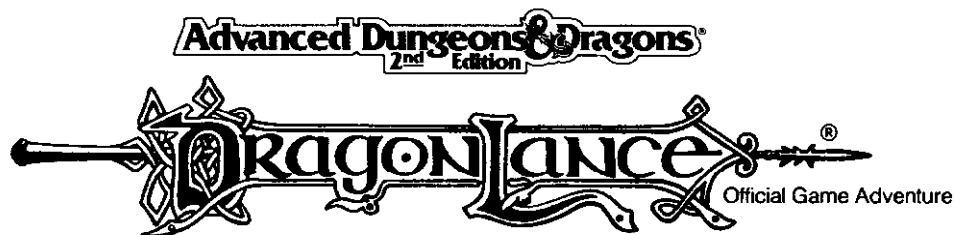
2nd: *resist fire*, *charm person*, *speak with animals*

3rd: *summon insects*

Kohver wears *banded mail* +1 festooned with feathers, fur, and claws for magical protection (AC 3). He shuns a shield, preferring to wield his weapons two-handed. Kohver wears a *cloak of elvenkind* once taken from a sacrificial victim, and wears a *ring of water breathing*.

The results of his spells, bestowed by Gorth, a lesser demigod, are not always predictable. There is a 10% chance for each spell cast that one of its elements (range, duration, area of effect) is either greater or lesser than normal (50% chance either way). The element affected is randomly determined by the DM.

The shaman stands 6' 5" tall and weighs 260 pounds. He has the slightly hunched posture of his ogrish kin, as well as the massive,



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INTRODUCTION

Dragon Dawn is the first of an adventure trilogy which begins in the League province of Highvale. All modules in the series are self-contained and can be played independently. However, if you plan to play the entire series, the modules should be played in order.

This adventure is designed for play by about five or six characters of 5th-7th level. Six pregenerated characters are provided as cut-out cards on the module cover; two alternate characters are described on p. 60.

With the DM's approval, players may modify the pre-generated characters or use their own characters. A balanced mix of character classes is suggested, but none may be of evil alignment.

ADVENTURING IN KRYNN

A successful DRAGONLANCE® game adventure has the feel of an epic novel in which the player characters are vital participants. DRAGONLANCE game adventures also stress a value system based on strong principles—that persevering forces of good can triumph over evil, and that good actions have good consequences, while evil actions have evil consequences. This adventure is based on these principles, and the DM should make sure that they hold true.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

ORGANIZATION AND TIMELINE

The adventure begins with the events of Chapter 1 ("The Rathwyck Marches") and ends with Chapter 6 ("Cloud Mesa"). These are the six main adventure chapters. They occur chronologically, so the PCs will move through them in sequence, from 1 through 6.

Each chapter begins with an overview which includes the chapter's major goals and discoveries.

Boxed text may be read directly to the players, or it may be paraphrased by the DM.

MAPS

The enclosed fold-out color map shows a section of Taladas, on the world of Krynn, across which this adventure takes place. This map begins on the eastern edge of the Minotaur League (at the edge of the large-scale map found in *Time of the Dragon*), and continues into the Steamwall mountains. Future modules will continue to expand the area covered by these large-scale maps. A similar but smaller map, highlighting the adventure's path, is printed on the module cover. Other pertinent maps are included in the center pull-out section of the module.

NONWEAPON PROFICIENCIES

Encounters in this module assume that nonweapon proficiencies are being used by player characters. If not, any alternate system can be employed, but DMs should be aware that proficiency skill checks are necessary at many points in the adventure.

SET-UP

This adventure begins in the Rathwyck Marches, which guard the southern Minotaur League border from the middle of Highvale to the Conquered Lands. Player characters have been recruited from throughout the League. If using the pre-generated characters, they have all worked with each other for awhile and were all found in one League town near the Marches—Vinlan, perhaps, or maybe even Rathlyn itself.

If this adventure is played as part of an ongoing campaign, you can alter the set-up as needed in order to introduce your PCs to this situation.

Two other things that the DM should be aware of: first, the dragon hunters (the adversaries in this module) are described on pp. 60-62. You should become familiar with them before beginning play. And second, some rolls (such as proficiency checks) indicate whether a character learns certain facts. At such times, it is better if the DM makes the roll(s) secretly, so that if the character fails the roll, the player doesn't realize that a roll was called for.

OTHER MODULE MATERIAL

In addition to the adventure and the fold-out map (which can easily be used for other adventures in the area), this module includes details of a new specialized class of Warrior, the Dragon Knight, plus Player Character Kits for Dragon Knights, Minotaur Warriors, and Hurdu. The Hurdu are a new race of lizard men; they and Sesk Draconians are given as additions to the *Monstrous Compendium*.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Amanthus is an ancient gold dragon, the only one of his kind who remained neutral in the War of the Lance. Now, evil dragons are rallying to join the War in Ansalon. This blatant involvement of Taladan dragons in human affairs has finally stirred Amanthus to action. He has decided to summon his fellow Othlorx of Taladas to a conclave where he hopes to persuade them to balance this evil involvement by joining the forces of good in the War. But the lords of evil have discovered Amanthus' intention, and plan to put a stop to it.

A bounty has been placed on the Othlorx; each left dragon ear presented earns a healthy reward. Bounty hunters have slain the dragon hatchlings of Baron Rathwyck, a Minotaur League lord of the Highvale-Conquered Lands border. The Baron retains our heroes to track down what he assumes is a group of poachers, but the party eventually realizes they have stumbled across a much larger plot—the methodical killing of dragons throughout southern Hosk. The adventurers face wilderness dangers and angry peoples stirred up by the destructive actions of their quarry.

PCs must evade hulderfolk traps and the pitfalls of a pre-Cataclysmic ruin to bring the hunters to bay. When they finally do so, the party learns about the bounty and the threat to all Othlorx. The adventurers must then win past the dragon defenses to bring this word of warning to Amanthus. The gold dragon enlists the heroes' aid in discovering who is behind the hired deaths of Taladan dragons. This leads into the second adventure in the trilogy, *Dragon Knight*.

CHAPTER I: THE RATHWYCK MARCHES



DM's OVERVIEW

This chapter begins as the player characters arrive to meet Baron Althen. Assuming they accept his commission, they travel with Chief Forester Eldic and Althen's daughter Derry to Sharlan Park, where the hatchlings were killed. There they attempt to pick up and follow the dragon hunters' trail.

As they proceed east, they leave Sharlan Park and enter the Conquered Lands, still in forest. They are attacked, first by stirges and then by a zombie, the corpse of one of Althen's foresters whom the dragon hunters killed and reanimated. When smoke from a large fire is spotted farther ahead to the east, Eldic decides that the situation has become too dangerous for Derry. He will return her to Narvenus and then meet the party at Haslit, the town he assumes is aflame.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

This adventure begins in the Rathwyck Marches, a region of Highvale in the Minotaur League which borders the territory of Armach and the Conquered Lands. Like many other nobles of the League, Baron Leonid Althen, the March Lord, has been forced to deplete his local military forces to supply the demands of warfare against Thenol. The Baron no longer controls his borders with the tight rein he once held. As in other parts of Highvale, key frontier fortifications stand empty or are manned only with skeleton garrisons. Althen's meager and wide-spread forces are unable to prevent wilderness creatures and intelligent marauders from infiltrating the now-vulnerable barony.

Baron Althen leads regular patrols through the Rathwyck Marches, attempting to sweep his territory clean of unwelcome intruders. This task is complicated by the fact that flocks of sheep and lone cattle vanish with alarming frequency from outlying villages, although conflicting reports attribute this simultaneously to Thenolian raiders, hunting dragons, and mysterious wilderness beasts. Frustrated with his understrength patrol forces, the Baron realizes he and his limited troops can do little to prevent these losses.

Now, to further strain the Baron's resources, unpleasant new events are taking place. In the last week, someone has begun to prey on the beasts which live in the Baron's forest hunting preserve, Sharlan Park. Chief Forester Eldic has brought grim reports of mutilated deer; of birds with wings purposefully broken and left to fend aground for themselves; of cunning woodlands traps built in open defiance of the Baron's laws against poaching.

The final outrage has been the wanton destruction of three hatchling copper dragons. A few months ago, the Baron slew their mother to protect farmers' livestock. When his hunters stumbled upon the starving hatchlings, Althen ordered them to be raised in the protection of Sharlan Park. Their deaths have thrown the Baron into exasperated fury: Eldic's foresters have been unable to catch the culprits, and the Baron himself has neither the time nor the manpower to conduct his own sweep of his valued game preserve.

Following Eldic's report, this new and brazen trespass spurred the Baron to action. Although unable to attend to the matter personally, he lost no time in responding to the unwelcome news. Althen ordered his Chief Forester to recruit accomplished adventurers, men and women who could draw on more skills than those possessed by his foresters.

These people would put a stop to the unscrupulous poachers intent on destruction.

In response to that summons, the player characters are brought together at House Narvenus, Baron Althen's castle in the Rathwyck Marches. When the party is assembled and ready to learn more about the task at hand, proceed with the information below.

UNREST IN THE MARCHES

Read the following to the adventurers out loud:

House Narvenus is the ancestral home of the March Lords of Rathwyck. What was once a simple walled keep has grown into a complex castle, sprawling in broad-flung yet purposeful design atop the peak and slopes of Bevic Hill. The work of generations of architects and their differing design philosophies lie concealed behind the castle's moss-grown granite walls. It is a work few see these days unless they live or toil within House Narvenus, for in these times of unrest, the castle gates remain closed to common townsfolk and casual visitors.

You and your companions, however, are far from casual visitors to Baron Althen's stronghold. A herald in the Baron's green-and-yellow livery met you when you arrived at the Cock and Bull in Rathlyn (the walled town which occupies the hillside between castle and valley floor) and requested your presence before his master; you are escorted to the nobleman by the herald and a polite contingent of guards. The procession passes conspicuously through the streets of Rathlyn; artisans and goodwives, laborers and merchants stare with curiosity as you pass by.

You are ushered past the central keep and into an adjoining hall of marble-faced granite, built with thick walls and narrow, high-arched window slits. A single, massive table of black walnut occupies this chamber, its polished highlights brought out by the weak spring sunlight which falls upon it from the open casements. Three figures are seated there, the two eldest engaged in quiet conversation. They look up as you enter, obviously expecting your arrival. Your guide and escort come to a halt. "My Lord," announces the herald, "the people you requested."

As the herald introduces you, you have a chance to study Baron Althen and his companions. At the head of the table Leonid Althen is unmistakable, a powerful, middle-aged man with grey-shot black hair, short trimmed beard, and riveting blue eyes. His doublet and hose are of the finest dark green velvet, slashed with yellow silk. The velvet is worn to a shine where a swordbelt holds his favorite broad sword ever ready by his side.

To the Baron's right sits a slender elf, dressed in the worn tunic and practical trousers of a woodsman. The silver horn at his belt and the gold oakleaf pin affixed to his tunic attest that this is Eldic, Chief Forester and Huntmaster of the Rathwyck Marches. To Eldic's right sits a slim, gangly youth with black hair and a tanned complexion, also wearing the plain garb of a forester. The youth regards you earnestly as the herald finishes announcing you.

The Baron permits you to sit, and silent servants move out from the shadows to make you comfortable at the March Lord's table. Even before they withdraw, Althen begins explaining why you have been summoned.

"Armach raiders continue to harry our borders, in spite of our 'truce' with them. Outlying farms are being destroyed, their livestock run off. I patrol our frontier as best I can with the men at my disposal. But now something has come up that I do not have the resources to deal with, not

in addition to our more serious border problems. Poachers." Althen spits the word with disgust, and nods to Eldic.

The Chief Forester turns to you. "In this last week, someone has begun to vandalize and poach in Sharlan Park, the barony's private game preserve. Deer are being mutilated; birds have their wings purposefully broken and are left aground to fend for themselves; vicious traps are built in open defiance of our laws against poaching."

"Now they have dared to murder my three hatchling copper dragons," Baron Althen interjects angrily. "I slew their mother two months ago, for she was preying openly on livestock. When we found her hatchlings I understood her voracious appetite. They were starving, so I took them under my protection."

Eldic nods grimly, and continues. "These are no ordinary poachers, or my foresters would have caught them by now. Two foresters have failed to return from the hunt for these trespassers." Eldic shifts uneasily at the admission. "We are uncertain how much of a threat this represents—"

"—but it is not one I plan to tolerate this close to House Narvenus!" concludes the Baron. "I therefore commission you to seek out these poachers, or misguided raiders, or whoever is afoot in Sharlan Park, and bring them to me for justice."

A young voice pipes up after the Baron's outburst. "I want to go, Father," demands the youth seated beside Eldic—and it is clear from the voice that the youth is no boy after all. Eldic's companion is a teenaged girl with the same raven black hair and intense blue eyes as Leonid Althen. The Baron scowls and shoots the upstart one look. "No," he says, with leaden finality. Then the March Lord turns to you, the scowl still upon his face.

"Well, gentlemen," he asks, "can you accommodate me?"

If PCs are familiar with the Rathwyck Marches, they realize that the forester youth must be Derry, Baron Althen's 15-year-old daughter. If characters have not spent much time in this area, they must ask appropriate questions of NPCs to learn more about Derry. Her history and circumstances are given along with her statistics, below.

Service and Rewards

If the PCs are not in service to the March Lord, they may wish to negotiate a price for their help. The Baron will not offer payment in advance unless there is no other way to gain the cooperation of the adventurers. In such a case, Althen handles the negotiations himself, since he is sensitive to the fact that these people were recruited specifically because of their unusual skills, abilities, and proven track record.

This border barony can offer only modest rewards of cash or treasure, but Althen will be most willing to create positions for the characters at his court, offering a modest salary and long-term employment. Rathwyck has never been able to afford the services of a court wizard, for example, but an adventurer who could be tempted by such a post will have it eagerly foisted upon him. A skilled fighter might be offered work as Assistant Master-at-Arms, while a rogue might be retained as bard, court jester, or advisor to the Chief Constable of Rathlyn. Characters should be offered positions commensurate with their skill and experience.

Alternatively, Baron Althen might offer successful characters a small plot of land in a frontier area. If PCs are commoners, this will be a farmstead the Baron wishes to keep occupied in spite of border problems. If any characters are of noble blood, Althen might offer an abandoned frontier

watchtower or keep which has fallen into disrepair. Such gifts of territory are really not the lavish reward they may seem: they are in frontier regions abandoned by Highvale citizens, invested with hostile creatures, often besieged by raiders, and usually in a state of disrepair if not absolute ruin. Such an offer is the Baron's attempt to reclaim lost portions of his most dangerous frontier borderlands.

Supplies

Once the commission has been accepted, Eldic describes more completely the region they will be investigating. Sharlan Park lies one day away, between Rathlyn and the Conquered Lands border. The preserve is half wilderness, half maintained parkland. Eldic will go with them and the Baron's hunting lodge will be made available to them, but characters should prepare for several days of non-rigorous camping in the outlying reaches of the preserve.

House Narvenus provides PCs with reasonable and ordinary supplies to accomplish their mission. This includes typical camping gear and appropriate clothing if needed. Mounts are supplied, but will be left at the hunting lodge on

this side of Sharlan Park—the park is too overgrown for horses to be much use anywhere near the dragons' cave. Minimal and commonplace magical components (such as sand or rose petals) will be supplied free of charge. There is a 10% chance for a potion with a value of 300 stl or less to be available in the Baron's storehouses. Other magical items are simply not to be had in this remote place, unless the DM deems a particular item or weapon necessary to help the party accomplish their mission.

When the party is ready, continue with the next section

UNEXPECTED COMPANY

When the party is assembled and ready to depart, read the following out loud:

Ready to depart, you gather in the castle courtyard. Your mounts await you, a dappled grey for the Chief Forester to ride, and one unclaimed bay. There is no explanation offered about the empty saddle in your midst, until a youth-

Baron Leonid Althen (12th level human fighter)

STR 15, INT 12, WIS 14, DEX 14, CON 16, CHA 16; AC 3; MV 12; #AT 3/2; HD WA12, hp 78; AL LG; THAC0 9.

Weapon Proficiencies: broad sword, long sword, dagger, mace, flail, lance, saber, short bow.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: horsemanship (17), siegecraft (12), diplomacy +1 (12), heraldry (12), government (14), hunting (13).

Languages: Auric, Kothian (12), Hoor (12).

Leonid Althen wears a *ring of gaseous form*. His broad sword is a *flametongue*. When he expects a battle, he wears *field plate* +1 (AC 1), but conducts most patrol work with a shield and *scale mail* +2 (AC 3, as given in statistics).

The Baron of Rathwyck is practical and proud of his accomplishments, having kept Highvale's southeastern border safe for nearly three decades. He is a widower whose son and heir, Rigel, commands Rathwyck's troop levies fighting against Thenol. Leonid has little concern for events beyond the scope of his barony. He is intent on regaining lands lost since troop levies were stripped from his border defenses.

Eldic, Chief Forester (9th level elvish ranger)

STR 13, INT 13, WIS 14, DEX 16, CON 14, CHA 13; AC 6; #AT 3/2; HD WA9, hp 53; AL NG; THAC0 12; HS 66%; MS 75%.

Weapon Proficiencies: long bow, long sword, light crossbow, heavy crossbow, sling, spear, net.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: animal lore (13), hunting (13), tracking (17), set snares (12), survival (13), weather sense (13).

Languages: Auric, Kothian (13), Tamire Elvish (13), Hoor (13).

Spells: 2 1st (Major: All, Animal, Charm, Divination, Healing, Plant; Minor: Combat, Protection); cast at 2nd level.

1st level: *cure light wounds*, *animal friendship*

Eldic is a tall elf in late middle years. He wears plain leather armor when hunting or patrolling in the woods (reflected in AC above); otherwise, he goes unarmored in practical woodsman's clothing. He carries a *long bow* +1 made by Armath craftsmen. The horn at his belt is a *horn of Valhalla* which summons fighters of NG alignment.

Eldic is a trustworthy retainer who has served three generations of March Lords. He speaks with quiet deliberation and is never hasty in word or action. Eldic is sympathetic to Derry's circumstances and has taken her under his wing, for

she is one of the few Althens to take an interest in the wilderness beyond what might be hunted in it. are granted by Paladine, but in exactly the same spheres as those of the quoyai.

Derry Althen (1st level female human fighter)

STR 7, INT 14, WIS 12, DEX 15, CON 9, CHA 16; AC 6; HD WA1; hp 7; AL NG; THAC0 20.

Weapon Proficiencies: sling, light crossbow, staff.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: animal lore (14), horsemanship (15), hunting (11), tracking (12).

Languages: Auric, Kothian (14), Hoor (14).

Although normally unarmored, Derry wears oversized ring mail (scavenged from a guard's cast-offs) if she thinks she might meet danger in the woods. She carries 24 +1 *bullets* for use in her sling, although she uses stones for commonplace targets. Her greatest prize, a present from Eldic, is a *portion of animal control* which affects mammals and avians. She carries it hidden in a pouch beneath her tunic.


Derry is Leonid's second child, seven years younger than her brother Rigel, the Baron's heir. Now at the age of 15, she is slim and active, not quite a woman, nor still a child. Derry is an optimistic extrovert who easily charms those around her. She can be as authoritative and commanding as her father, although she needs more experience of the world to order others with wisdom.

When his wife died giving birth to Derry, Leonid's attention turned almost exclusively to his son. Derry has grown up largely on her own, only loosely supervised. Some say her father has let her run wild, but none can say she is spoiled, for Eldic has undertaken to give her the discipline and training the Baron neglects.

However, the elvish ranger's idea of training is far different from what humans consider appropriate for a baron's daughter. Since her early childhood Derry has practiced weapons skills and learned much of woodsmanship from the Chief Forester and his fellows. Although her training has been acquired piecemeal, the Baron's daughter is the equivalent of a 1st-level fighter.

Derry is ambitious and aspires to even greater martial accomplishments, hoping in this way to distinguish herself and gain her father's recognition. She often gains unusual concessions from her father, who feels guilty over his open preference for Rigel.





ful forester approaches and grasps the reins. This slim, boyish teenager is dressed in oversized ring mail and worn trousers, with a sling and weighted pouch hanging from her belt. She swings into the saddle and looks expectantly around the group.

"Let's get underway," she says confidently. "We've poachers to catch!"

Since the party's first meeting with the Baron, Derry has spoken with her father and extorted permission to go from him. She has promised to stay with Eldic, follow the Chief Forester's orders, and not interfere with the adventurers during their quest. Eldic himself was ignorant of this arrangement until just now. PCs may nurture misgivings, but there is nothing to be done for it.

If the characters do not know who she is or have not been introduced, Derry introduces herself to them. She ignores anyone who addresses her as "my Lady," and insists on being called by her first name. Derry should present an unlikely figure, an ill-dressed youthful tagalong of boisterous good humor who will in all likelihood be underfoot. In addition to her personal gear and weapons at her belt, her quarterstaff is strapped to a pack horse, and a light crossbow hangs from her saddle. It is not evident by appearances that she knows how to fight; indeed, unless PCs specifically ask, they should not realize that Derry is capable of using any of her weapons. She assumes everyone knows this about her, and will take offense at disparaging remarks that suggest a lack of skill. Eldic, caught by surprise, will not speak up in Derry's defense; and at any rate, she is fully capable of speaking for herself.

SHARLAN PARK

Led by Chief Forester Eldic, the adventurers head south-east across the Rathwyck Marches, toward the Conquered Lands. An uneventful day's journey delivers the travelers to Baron Althen's hunting lodge. There they can spend the night and set off into the game preserve in the morning.

The Baron's hunting lodge is a spacious two-storied house of stone standing in a copse of pine and cedar. Ivy has overgrown the front and sides, framing window casements and shutters with fronds of green. The lodge is not unoccupied, for smoke issues from one of the brick chimneys, and a forester steps out on the wooden porch as your party draws near. Eldic hails the fellow, who takes charge of your mounts and gear while the Chief Forester leads you inside.

Sharlan Park is a wilderness area that spreads over a series of ridges and valleys. Parts are left in their natural state while other sections of the park are maintained to provide enjoyable landscape vistas. The lodge is at the northwest edge of the park; it spreads as far as a day's mounted journey to the east and south.

The hunting lodge is merely a waystop en route to the scene of the poachers' vandalism. Each character is given his own room on the second floor of the lodge.

Either during the PCs' daytime travels, or during their stay at the lodge, Eldic and Derry should strike up casual conversation that imparts the following information. These facts provide the characters with useful background information for their adventure. Even characters who are native to this area will find these comments helpful "reminders" about their knowledge of geography and current events. The comments given below can be mentioned by either Eldic or Derry.

—There's fine hunting in Sharlan Park. Even dragons come here once in a while to hunt, though we don't encourage

that. Lucky thing, they favor the Conquered Lands over Highvale woods. The few that come to the Park have been copper or, occasionally, bronze dragons—which is just as well, since they usually leave honest folk alone.

—We keep a sharp eye out for ogres. They live in nomad camps there, over the Conquered Lands border. But when the winter is hard and game disappears elsewhere, they sneak into the parklands hunting for food. They're a lot craftier in the woods than folks give 'em credit for.

—The border is hardly marked, between us and the Conquered Lands, and Sharlan Park runs right along its edge. That's why we have so many foresters: they keep the parklands free of twisted creatures wandering in from over the border. Not to mention Landers—they fancy themselves pioneers, but come poaching in here for their food.

If PCs have questions about the details of poaching incidents in the park, Eldic will not describe the dragon hatchlings, saying only, "You can see for yourself tomorrow." Regarding other outrages, he and Derry tell of cruel traps and wastefully dead animals: snares set to injure, not slay; a fawn, tethered and left staked out as bait in a meadow; a wild sheep found dead with almost all of its wool fallen off and its skin oddly blistered.

In fact, all these "poaching" incidents are the result of the outright cruelty of Anishta's dragon hunters (as with the snares and injured animals), or of their ill-conceived attempts to lure dragons to bait in order to kill them (both fawn and sheep were lures; the sheep was poisoned). These evidences have been disposed of by the foresters, who did not recognize any value in them as clues.

However, this description of bait and lures might serve as a general clue to PCs. Characters with the Hunting proficiency should check that skill at a -4 penalty. If successful, they realize that the fawn and sheep were being used as bait, obviously for a large predator. Characters with the Herbalism proficiency may make a similar check to realize that the sheep was probably poisoned (in order to poison what consumed it).

THE BUTCHERED HATCHLINGS

When the party sets out in the morning, Eldic takes them to the site of the most recent poaching incident—the place where the hatchling dragons were slain. They reach their destination by early afternoon.

Eldic leads you deeper into Sharlan Park's shady woodlands, heading for the ravine-riddled foothills edging a distant valley. One ravine is wooded at its mouth, giving way to shrubbery and a broad, boulder-strewn gully floor. Into this ravine the Chief Forester takes you.

Far back in the ravine several caves gape open in the steep, cliff-like walls. Remnants of cracked and gnawed bones are scattered on the gully floor between the stream and the mouth of the largest cave. Eldic points to them. "We fed the baby dragons here. They were too young to fend for themselves, but they made short work of whatever we brought them. When they weren't wandering around the ravine, the hatchlings stayed in this cave."

The Chief Forester leads the way to the largest cavern. A charnel-house smell of death and decay comes from the enclosed space. "They were killed three days ago. We left things as we found them, for you to investigate as you wish. My foresters have kept most scavengers away."

The cave mouth is about 10 feet wide but only 5 feet high. The cavern stretches 40 feet back into the cliffside in a roughly diamond-shaped floor; it is widest in the middle, where the ceiling is 15' overhead, then narrows again at the far end. The space is somewhat illuminated by indirect sunlight. There are no other chambers and no special hazards awaiting the PCs within. When the adventurers enter the cavern, read the following out loud:

The hatchlings had been but a few months old, baby copper dragons of good nature and undeveloped defenses. Now ants and other insects feast on the three mutilated carcasses inside the cave. None are left intact; it looks like each hatchling fell victim to a vicious butcher, not a poacher. An ill sound comes from Derry, who bolts quickly from the cave, her hand clasped over her mouth.

It is evident that the hatchlings were slain painfully, severely wounded and allowed to die a slow death. If the remains are examined more closely, the characters notice that each dragon is missing its left ear, which is not to be found in the carnage which remains in the cave.

(This is because the dragon hunters take the left ear, or tip of the ear from larger dragons, as proof of their kills. Only a portion of Anishta's party confronted the hatchling dragons in their lair. This portion then returned to the main camp ("4. Cold Ashes," below) and left with the rest of the priestess' party.)

Eldic's foresters have been unable to track the poachers beyond this cave: the bare rock outside holds no footprints, while the surrounding woodlands and the dragon hunters' magic have defeated the foresters' efforts at tracking. The Chief Forester now turns the investigation over to the PCs, and withdraws outside the cavern. Eldic will answer any questions he can (about local terrain, and so on), but stays out of their way while they work.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

By the time the party has finished examining the dragons' cave, it is mid-afternoon. (Remember that they must make camp around nightfall.) When the PCs have finished with the cave and are ready to begin tracking, read the following out loud:

The underbrush in this part of the woodlands is sparse, allowing you to see unhindered for at least a hundred yards through the stands of pine and ash. The rocky ravine gives way to bramble-choked woodland floor, where branches intertwine in a green canopy overhead.

Derry and Eldic will assist in the search if the PC party is lacking characters with hunting or tracking skills. Otherwise they hold back and let the PCs take the lead.

A hunting or tracking proficiency check should be made for each hour of search by each PC. Tracking checks carry a -2 penalty, while hunting checks are made at -4.

If characters without hunting or tracking proficiencies want to help, they must roll a natural 1 (on a d20) in order to find helpful tracks or other clues. The reduced odds of their success should not be apparent to the searchers. If unskilled PCs search the same area as characters with hunting or tracking abilities, proficient PCs suffer an additional -1 penalty to reflect the chance of their companions accidentally obscuring tracks or other clues. If the party has useful magic at their disposal, it is up to the DM to determine what effect that may have on their investigations.

The first successful check discovers the scratch marks (described below) and indicates a faint trail. To follow the trail, successful hunting checks at -2 or tracking checks (at no penalty) must be made. This check is repeated for each hour the trail is followed. Failure means that the trail is lost, and skill checks again become more difficult by -2.

For each hour in which at least one successful check is made, read one of the clues detailed below.

The trail PCs discover leads to the southeast, toward the border of the Conquered Lands and the boundary of Sharlan Park. Unless the PCs are intimately familiar with the Barony of Rathwyck, they will not realize how close they are to entering the Conquered Lands. The Chief Forester, anxious to run these poachers to ground, does not care if PCs go beyond the Baron's borders in the course of their manhunt, and will not comment on their location.

As mentioned above, it is now mid-afternoon. Be sure the party has discovered all five clues by mid-afternoon tomorrow, even if Eldic and Derry must help.

1. Scratch Marks

Odd scratch marks are visible on certain stones near the riverbed. They appear to be left by sharp claws, but are found in a pattern that indicates an upright, two-legged walker.

The claw marks are left by some type of draconians. If the characters have never met draconians before, they have no way of recognizing the precise nature of the claw marks. If a PC with hunting or tracking skill has previously encountered draconians, allow him to check at a -4 penalty to recognize the marks.

2. Footprints

The loam turned up around a small animal's burrow has captured an odd set of footprints. It is the impression left by a sandal-clad foot with sharp overhanging claws. By the length of the stride and the depth of the impression, it was left by a creature standing about 4 feet tall and weighing about 120 to 150 pounds.

Characters skilled in hunting or tracking and who are familiar with draconians may make an INT check to recognize this description and realize what creature left these footprints.

3. Broken Greenery


Crushed shrubbery reveals that a group of creatures passed this way, although their exact numbers are uncertain. Twigs broken overhead indicate that at least some of them stand six feet tall or more.

Characters with hunting or tracking proficiencies perceive that five to ten creatures passed this way. The tall ones which passed by are ogres, although this should not be evident without the use of magic.

4. Cold Ashes

By a stream, a small cookfire was built not long ago. The coals are cold, but the hodge-podge of blurred tracks show that several gathered around this fire to eat and drink.





The dragon hunters ate their last meal here before sneaking into Sharlan Park to destroy the hatchlings. They retraced their steps along the same route when leaving the area. Tracks here reveal no further details about the party the PCs are pursuing, except to confirm that the group of poachers consists of several persons, ranging in size from short (i.e., draconians) to tall (ogres).

5. Blaze Marks

In this stretch of woodland, the ash trees and pine of Sharlan Park blends into stands of cedar. At intervals along the trail, certain tree trunks bear blazes for pathfinding. Notches are cut into the bark in a peculiar wedge-shaped pattern, distinctly marking the poachers' backtrail even where their spoor is hard to read.

The fragrant stands of cedar mark the boundary of Sharlan Park and the beginning of Conquered Lands territory. Confident they could easily deal with any pursuit beyond the border, the dragon hunters marked their backtrail up to this point so they could easily locate Anishta's main camp in this unfamiliar terrain.

The type of blaze mark found on these trees was made by Tekolo in the distinctive style of the hurdu. At the DM's discretion, characters from the Steamwall region might recognize this as the handiwork of a hurdu.

From this point on, if PCs notice and care that they are out of the Baron's jurisdiction, let them suddenly find a clue which suggests that the poachers are near: a fresh and distinct footprint, horse droppings, or warm embers from a fire should serve to prompt them on their way. Since the main body of poachers has a two-day head start on the PCs, fresh spoor could have been left by rear-guard, which is now catching up with the others.

TROUBLE IN THE AIR

After following the blaze marks for about half an hour, read the following out loud:

At one side of a glade, a pair of booted feet protrude from the wild, overgrown brambles.

This fellow is one of two missing foresters who was tracking the poachers. He fell victim not to the dragon hunters, but to a flock of stirges which inhabit the trees near this overgrown dell. Roll for initiative; if the stirges have the advantage, they attack the party before the characters can investigate the corpse and discover that it has been drained of blood. Otherwise, they attack immediately after PCs realize how the forester died.

A closer look reveals that this forester has been drained of blood through many puncture wounds on his body. There is nothing of special interest among his possessions, although his long bow, dagger and quiver of 24 normal arrows are all useful and undamaged equipment. An ordinary horn hangs at the fellow's belt, used for long-distance signalling.

The skeletal remains of other stirge victims lie half-concealed in the brambles. Among the thorns lie 83 gp, a kender's hoopai, and a sling with 7 +1 bullets.

Stiff batlike wings beat the air and a flurry of small bodies swoops down upon you from the branches overhead. You get a quick impression of long, needle-sharp beaks and grasping talons before the creatures are upon you.

Stirges (10): AC 8; MV 3, Fl 18 (C); HD 1 + 1 (attack as 4 HD), hp 6 each; #AT 1, Dmg 1d3 + blood drain; Size S (2' wing-span); Morale 8; AL N; THACO 17.

Once a stirge successfully hits, it remains attached, draining 1d4 hp of blood each round. It drops off after it has drained 12 hp of blood. The only way to detach it from its prey is to kill it.

Five of the stirges gang up on one randomly determined PC. Another attacks Derry. The remaining four attack other, randomly chosen characters. Eldic fights first to protect Derry; only after the threat to her is gone will he and Derry aid the party. After this skirmish, Eldic is visibly upset. He turns on Derry in front of the adventurers with this declaration:

"Do you see now what foolishness this is you talked your father into? This is a far cry from a deer hunt near the lodge. You've no business out here, and I'll not be the one to explain your death to the Baron!"

The elf is flushed with anger. He bites his words off, turns sharply on his heel and walks some distance away to collect himself. Derry, chastised, stands sheepishly. She keeps quiet, responding only in monosyllables if PCs try to cheer her up with conversation or tend any bites she has. Tension remains in the air between the Chief Forester and his apprentice. Let it be obvious to the PCs that Eldic is seriously concerned over Derry's welfare. Nothing the PCs say will succeed in putting the elf at ease.

TWO DISCOVERIES

When the party is ready to continue following the dragon hunters' trail, read the following:

Following the poachers' backtrail is easy with the aid of blaze marks. Their track leads into forested foothills flanking a broad, wooded valley. Late in the day, the path climbs a gradually ascending slope, cresting at the dropoff of a deep, shrub-choked ravine. From that vantage point, two things are clearly visible. One is a campsite in the ravine below. The other is a pall of thick smoke hanging in a broad curtain over the far end of the valley.

"Looks like we found their camp," Eldic comments dryly. "I like this less and less. See how many there must be? Two cook fires; sleeping space cleared for at least 10, maybe more. And a tether line for mounts between those saplings." The Chief Forester shakes his head grimly. "This is more than we bargained for. And that." He looks up, motioning toward the distant smoke. "Something big is burning. And the only big thing there besides forest is the village of Haslit."

If the party checks out the ravine campsite, Eldic makes Derry wait on the ridge until it is clear that there are no hidden dangers down below. If they do not check the ravine, skip to "Farewell," below.

Ravine Campsite

A large party obviously camped in this ravine for several days. The campsite is garbage-strewn; the remains of two cooking fires and multiple sleeping spaces show that Eldic's estimate of 10 or more poachers is accurate.

Characters with tracking or hunting skill can make a closer examination of this campsite. If proficiency checks are successful, the characters can determine that there are a total of

13 persons in the dragon hunters' party, and they have 12 mounts and/or pack animals with them. The footprints of five ogres are recognized as such if the tracking PC might recognize them and makes a successful INT check.

If PCs declare that they are searching more of the ravine than just the campsite, they discover a chilling sight.

The second missing forester is found in the upper reaches of the ravine. Spreadeagled across a bloodstained rock, the man is decked with roots and feathers, as if slain in a ceremonial manner. He has been dead for several days.

This forester is not only a sacrifice to Anishta's evil deity; he has also been made into a zombie. Four rounds after any character approaches within 30 feet of the sacrificial rock, the zombie rouses himself and attacks the nearest living creature. If the PCs have departed the area by then, the zombie follows their trail and attacks the first person he comes to. He fights until destroyed.

Zombie (1): AC 8; MV 6; HD 2, hp 16; #AT 1, Dmg 1d8; Size M; AL N; SD immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, *death magic*, *cold*-based spells, and poison; THACO 19.

FAREWELL

When the party is ready to follow the poachers further, read the following:

The Chief Forester is clearly ill at ease with the discovery of the campsite and of the distant fire. After speaking with Derry in hushed undertones, he turns to the rest of your group.

"I regret we can no longer continue like this. It was a poor idea for the young Lady of Rathwyck to accompany us into danger. It is my duty to see her safely back to her father, and I feel the time has come to do so. My men at the hunting lodge will return her to House Narvenus; I will deliver her to them then return to meet you. Meanwhile, you should continue following their trail, although it seems fairly obvious that they just went straight down the valley. I'll meet you at the village of Haslit, for I fear that is the source of the smoke we see. Simply follow this stream—it flows the length of Wyvern Valley here, directly to the village."

Eldic's decision is a firm one. He cannot be dissuaded. If the PCs want to wait for him before venturing on to the source of the fire, Eldic virtually orders them to continue lest the poachers slip away. In fact, the dragon hunters did nothing to conceal their trail when they left this camp; their route plainly leads in the same direction as the village. Eldic promises to join the PCs in Haslit in no more than 48 hours if he departs with Derry now. Derry is angry and says her goodbyes curtly, then leaves with Eldic.

WYVERN VALLEY

Wyvern Valley is a long, narrow, densely wooded valley between rocky foothills. If the DM wishes to challenge PCs with encounters in this region, the "Wilderness Encounters" on pp. 10-11 can be used. Such encounters are not essential to the course of this adventure, but can be mixed into the other events of the adventure.

It is late afternoon when Eldic and Derry leave the party. It will take a day and a half of steady travel for the adventurers to reach the gap where Haslit is located. Going is slow because there are no trails to ease passage through this region.

In addition, the party is now solidly inside Conquered Lands territory, where the woodland becomes increasingly dense and overgrown the farther east one travels.

The stream which flows eastward the length of the valley is a reliable guide. Although it meanders back and forth, rushing over tumbled boulders and beneath hollowed-out banks, its course is steady and the going slightly easier than elsewhere in Wyvern Valley. "Easy going" is a relative term in this bramble-choked woodland, though. Pine and cedar grow close together and underbrush catches at feet and blocks obvious pathways. Progress is steady, but slow. There are no more blaze marks, but it's still obvious that the poachers used this stream as a guide also.

The adventurers' first night in Wyvern Valley is uneventful. When they break camp and begin their second day's march, read the following out loud:

The forest grows denser as you continue eastward. It is impossible to see for any great distance or to move rapidly through the clinging underbrush. Although no threat seems close at hand, now and then something crashes through the brush out of sight, some considerable distance to the left. Hours later, there are more faint crashing sounds, as of something pushing or tumbling through shrubbery some distance away to the right. The sound does not repeat itself and is impossible to pinpoint.

PCs can investigate if they wish, but will find nothing of special interest.

In the late afternoon, the sun shifting through leaves must be playing tricks on your eyes. It seems as if humanoid forms move through the westward-slanting sunbeams, casting eerie, long shadows before them. Looking behind, there is nothing to be seen where the westering sun slants sharply through cedar boughs.

The PCs should have no luck tracking down these mysterious sounds and shadows. The purpose of these encounters is to let the adventurers suspect that something is out there and that they are possibly being followed. Actually, the distant crashes are caused by ogres moving carelessly through forest underbrush as they chase Derry. The moving shadows are a fluke of sunlight, catching ogres as they moved across high ground several hundred yards behind the party.

By nightfall, the rising smoke is still several hours away; the party will need to camp here for the night before pressing on to Haslit.



WILDERNESS ENCOUNTERS

Wilderness encounters occur with greater frequency in the Conquered Lands than in more civilized Highvale. Throughout these chapters (between Wyvern Valley and Deep Forest) such encounters are likely to occur. Pick one or more encounters from the "Adventure Encounter Table" (below) each day, or determine when an encounter occurs, and which one, by rolling 1d4 four times a day. A result of 1 indicates that an encounter takes place; roll 1d10 and check the table to see what kind.

ADVENTURE ENCOUNTER TABLE

1. More Ogres
2. More Ogres
3. Faerie Ring
4. Faerie Ring
5. Copper Dragon
6. Armach Raiders
7. Landers
8. Boggy Pond
9. Widow Makers
10. Loose Rock

Each of these encounters are described below. In addition to these encounters, or in place of them, feel free to use "The League Lands" encounter table (on the back of the "Typical Gnome Citadel" card in *Time of the Dragons*). If these encounters are used, the Ogre and Hulderfolk encounters listed on the card can occur independently (the party has met creatures who aren't involved in the events of this adventure) or as variations on the ogre and hulder encounters described below.

1-2. More Ogres

Over two weeks ago, Anishta's group killed a green dragon that the Crumbling Cliff ogre tribe believed was the incarnation of the tribe's guardian spirit. Afterward, the dragon hunters burned the ogre settlement to distract them and delay any pursuit. Although the fire indeed served as distraction, it did not prevent the ogres from following. Several ogre raiding parties have spread out in this westward section of the Conquered Lands, intent on revenge for the wrongs committed by Anishta and her companions.

Though the ogres have been on the warpath for two weeks they have had no success in catching up with the dragon hunters. Some have come closer than others; all have become frustrated and are ready to take their anger out on anyone who could remotely be a dragon hunter. PCs on Anishta's trail are just such a target.

When this encounter occurs, read the following out loud:

The Spindle looms overhead, a massive, upthrust finger of rock on the shoulder of the nearby ridge. Pine forest carpets the rising ground leading into the mouth of the Gap, a cliff-edged notch which interrupts the ridge-line and makes the Spindle tower that much higher above the forest floor. A faint trail is visible, leading out of the Gap and up the ridgeline to the base of the Spindle. There is no sign of dragons or fresh sign of dragon hunters in the area.

As they have marched closer to the Spindle, the adventurers have unwittingly walked right into a section of territory combed by ogres who also search for the dragon hunters. Noticing the PCs' approach, the ogres gather their forces and attack the party, intending to take prisoners back to Crumbling Cliffs and kill any who resist.

These ogres are the kinfolk of Gorrim and his companions, who chase Derry through Wyvern Valley at the end of Chapter 1 and the beginning of Chapter 2. If Gorrim or his fellows are with the PC party, the ogres do not attack, but come forward and talk—at first suspiciously, then in a friendly manner. They will help the party in the same way as Gorrim. Otherwise, the ogres attack as described below.

A chorus of roars resounds from all around, accompanied by the sudden crash of shrubbery trampled underfoot. In an eyeblink, ogres burst forth from concealing woods, and are upon you.

Ogres: AC 5; MV 9; HD 4+1, hp 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10 + 2 (using club, with STR bonus); Size L; Morale 11; AL CON; THACO 17.

There are as many ogres as there are members in the player character party. The ogre raiders have surprise. Initiative rolls are modified accordingly, unless characters have taken careful measures to scout out their surroundings. If PCs have taken pains to scout thoroughly, adventurers and ogres notice each other simultaneously. In that case, initiative is determined in the ordinary manner.

The ogres each pick a single opponent, and close to engage that target. Fired by hatred and fighting for revenge, the ogres battle to the death. They will take prisoner any characters who are wounded enough to fall unconscious and be out of active combat.

Ogres Captured. If any ogres are captured and questioned, they reveal the information given by Gorrim (p. 13) about Anishta's offenses. See Gorrim's conversation for an example of what these ogres will say. They will help if to do so offers revenge on Anishta's party, but will not agree to give Anishta and her underlings to the PCs. The ogres are evasive if questioned about this point.

PCs Captured. If captured PCs convince the ogres they have mistaken their identities, the ogres leave the adventurers guarded by two of their number and continue their search for Anishta and company. If the captives fail to convince the ogres of their mistake, the raiders take them away through the forestland to the northeast, heading for the Crumbling Cliffs tribal area a week's travel distant. There they plan on torturing their captives and putting them slowly to death.

In either case, the ogres do not take exceptional measures to guard their captives beyond stripping the party of weapons, tying them up, and posting an alert guard. If the ogres think the PCs are Anishta's group, one or two of the raiders maliciously kick and pester the captives at every opportunity. Any PC who is mouthy or troublesome is knocked unconscious and kept gagged thereafter.

Any clever ploy used by the PCs should succeed in getting them out of this unwelcome situation. If the PCs do not get free before they arrive in Crumbling Cliffs territory, they have an even more difficult time freeing themselves in the heart of the ogres' village. At any rate, the exact details of their captivity and ogre reactions are for the DM to determine.

Delays represented by the party's possible captivity have no effect on the course of the main adventure. When characters return to the area of the Spindle, simply pick events up where they left off, assuming that Anishta's party encountered unexpected delays of their own.

3-4. Faerie Ring

Mushrooms and wildflowers grow about a circular clearing in the woodland. It is more wildly overgrown than a man-made clearing, yet seems more orderly than a natural meadow. It almost seems planned, for the mushrooms grow in a broad stretch around the perimeter of the meadow clearing, while the center hosts only wildflowers.

In this faerie ring, hulderfolk gather for ceremonial dances under the full moon, and other celebrations of nature. Elementals of wind and earth immediately inform the local hulderfolk if this sacred space has been intruded upon. Once hulderfolk become aware of intruders, they follow undetectably and mischievously pester the characters.

Bard characters and PCs who have had prior experience with hulderfolk (DM's discretion) have a chance of recognizing this area for what it is. Such characters should be allowed to make an INT check at a -4 penalty. Success does not negate the hulderfolk attentions which follow this encounter, but alerted characters will understand sooner what they are up against, instead of being baffled.

Once anyone has passed through this area, local hulderfolk are alerted to the presence of intruders by their elemental friends. (Ogres which flee the party run through the Ring and trigger this response as well.) The first signs that hulderfolk are about and taking an unhealthy interest in the characters are very subtle ones. It should not be apparent to the adventurers at first whether these events are coincidental oddities, or the work of an intelligent mind.

Hulderfolk-caused phenomena begin one hour after the faerie ring is encountered, and at random intervals after that. Roll 1d6 to see how many hours go by between subsequent events. The following are suggestions, and can be altered as the DM sees fit.

Faerie lights. One or more PCs become the target for a glowing *faerie* fire outline. Dancing lights will tempt adventurers off their path or lure sentries away from their campsite to investigate the ever-receding lights in the woods.

Twining vines. Shrubbery and ivy vines grasp for PCs, stubbornly entangling the characters' feet and gear. This is the result of plant life being animated with *entangle* spells, but the characters are not attacked beyond having their movement hindered.

Murmuring woodlands. The trees and plants seem to murmur words and phrases. Wind in branches overhead whistles a tuneful melody, and stones grumble in grating monotonies. This is actually the work of elementals communicating with hulderfolk in the area immediately surrounding the characters. A *comprehend languages* or *tongues* spell enables a character to understand the hubbub, which is mostly facetious comment with the PCs as the object of ridicule. If characters cannot magically understand what is being said, the eerie sounds of almost-language coming from their surroundings should leave them appropriately spooked.

5. Copper Dragon

The only copper dragon PCs will encounter in this region is Gabus, the male member of the mated pair of copper dragons which lair at the Spindle. Following his encounter with the dragon hunters, this dragon is angry and aggrieved and on the rampage. The party will encounter him only as he swoops by in headlong flight, notices the adventurers, then circles back to chase them into hiding with a quick attack of acid breath. Gabus then flies away, and does not engage the PCs in further combat at this time.

6. Armach Raiders

In spite of the truce between elven Armach and the Minotaur League, independent-minded raiding parties continue to sortie across the borders. A group of seven raiders are encountered returning from a looting expedition among distant villages. They attack immediately and fight to kill, intent on taking any valuables the PCs have. They are on foot but lead three moderate-quality riding horses they have stolen. Their loot includes 500 stl, 2,000 gp, jewelry worth 1,000 stl, a *potion of water breathing*, and a *long sword +2*, used by their leader. Raiders have these statistics: AC 6; MV 12; HD WA2, hp 14; Dmg 1d8 (long sword); AL N; THAC0 19.

7. Landers

Landers are the human pioneers who dwell in the frontier wilderness of the Conquered Lands. There will be two of them—hunters, trappers, or traders hiking many miles to visit “neighbors” and barter trade goods. Landers encountered are armed with a weapon which does 1d6 damage and fight (if necessary) as 1st-level warriors. They are suspicious of strangers and prone to fight, but will talk if they react well to the party. Average Landers have these statistics: AC 9; MV 12; HD WA1, hp 6; Dmg 1d6; AL NG; THAC0 20.

8. Boggy Pond

In low-lying areas, rainwater and run-off have collected in ponds, but have been unable to drain farther. The ground surrounding the ponds is boggy and mucky. Movement through such an area is slowed by half. Also, there is a 20% chance for a bog to mire and hold riding mounts, or any creature which weighs more than a large man. If this happens, PCs must join a total of 30 strength points in order to pull the victim free of the bog. The effort to free the victim can be made once per round, and each PC making the attempt must make a successful STR check for the attempt to work. The character is sucked below the surface 1d3 turns after he gets stuck, and drowns 1d4 rounds later.

9. Widow Makers

In dense parts of the forest, old, tall trees sometimes drop deadwood or pine cones on persons passing below. The noise and vibration of the characters' passage is sufficient to jar such an item loose from a tree. Roll 1d20 to determine if the object strikes a passing character; a result of 16 or greater is a hit. A falling object does 6d6 damage to the person it hits, primarily to the head. If a helmet is worn, allow the PC to save vs. paralyzation to take only half damage from the impact.

10. Loose Rock

In some areas forest gives way to rocky ground, where weather has carved stone into layers of boulders and loose pebbles. If PCs cross such terrain afoot, have each one make a DEX check to avoid losing their footing. If a character falls, save again to avoid injury from the fall. Otherwise the character sprains his ankle or suffers a similar mishap, enduring 1d2 points of damage. Movement and combat abilities are affected accordingly.



CHAPTER 2: SPINDLE GAP



DM's OVERVIEW

The night before the party gets to Haslit, nighttime rest is interrupted by the roar of ogres as they chase a terrified Derry into camp. The ogres are enraged because the dragon hunters have killed a green dragon whom the ogres worshipped. The ogres have already killed Eldic, and are hunting for any other possible culprits, including the party itself.

The morning after a friendly or unfriendly resolution of the ogre attack, our heroes arrive in Haslit, which has indeed been almost completely torched. The villagers are suspicious of them, but if the PCs can allay this suspicion, Emla, the village headwoman, will send them on toward Spindle Gap, to follow the dragon hunters, rescue a hostage villager, and save two dragons who roost at the top of the Spindle.

Continuing toward the gap in the Traben mountains marked by a tall spindle, or spire, the party survives various wilderness dangers and finally arrive at the base of the Spindle. They are met there by Tavin Longspear, a dragon knight whose bonded dragon, Gabus, is one of the pair who roost on the Spindle. While Tavin is trying to send them away, Gabus, enraged by the death of his mate, attacks.

Tavin is able to call Gabus off before serious damage is done, and when they and the party compare notes, they agree to continue the search together.

NIGHT FLIGHT

When the characters make camp for the evening, the following encounter occurs at a random time during the night, and after most of the party is bedded down. These sounds are

heard from the same randomly determined point outside the party's camp perimeter.

Without warning, a horrendous sound cuts through the forest night. It is a mighty roar, something ripped from the throat of a large and angry creature. Immediately afterward comes the rending and tearing crash of a toppling tree. The ground shudders with the impact. From that direction, something comes crashing in leaps and bounds through the dark wood toward the campsite.

The figure running toward the campsite in the dark is Derry, chased by a furious ogre intent on killing her. Her recent adventures and the reason ogres are chasing her are explained below. For now, the characters have only two rounds following the ogre's first roar in which to take action before Derry is in their midst. The ogre arrives one round later, and is joined by a second ogre four rounds after that.

If PCs attack Derry, thinking she is a hostile creature, the DM should alter attack and damage rolls and saving throws as need to guarantee that Derry is not slain in this encounter. Once she runs into the shelter of the adventurers' camp, she skids to a halt, turns to face the forest, then twirls her sling and prepares to attack the ogre she expects at any moment. She fights until all her +1 bullets are gone, then uses stones. Derry does not use her sling if PCs have closed in melee combat with both ogres.

Ogres (2): AC 5; MV 9; HD 4+1, hp 18, 28; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10 +2 (using club, for STR bonus); Size L; Morale 11; AL CON; THACO 17.

The first ogre into the clearing is lightly wounded in the shoulder, where a bolt from Derry's light crossbow protrudes. He persists in chasing Derry, ignoring other opposition and trying to close with the young fighter. If the PCs put up a disorganized defense, it should look like the ogre comes close to doing this, although Derry is always able to skip out of his reach at the last moment and dodge behind any PC who might be able to protect her. This ogre turns his anger fully on anyone who engages him in melee and blocks his singleminded pursuit of revenge. He fights aggressively, retreating only if he is reduced to 1/4 of his hit points.

The second ogre was drawn to the scene by his companion's bellow of rage. This one joins his companion in battle if it looks like PCs are on the defensive. If an offensive is underway or if the first ogre is under attack by more than two opponents, the second ogre hesitates at the edge of firelight for one round, then retreats.

If he is allowed to escape, he returns with the rest of his raiding party (five more ogres) in one hour. Those ogres gather in mass and rush the camp all at once, retreating only if their morale breaks. They fight with the intention of slaying the PCs, retreating only if their morale breaks.

When the dust has settled and the (first) melee is resolved, (but before a return engagement takes place) Derry explains what has happened.

Derry hooks her sling through her belt with trembling fingers, then sits abruptly by the campfire, the strength gone out of her legs. She heaves a sigh, and shakes her head in relief. "By Hitehkel's mists!" she exclaims wearily. "I'm glad that's over. This was a day I'd gladly trade for any other." A look of pain and grief crosses her drawn, dirt-smudged face, and she stares, frowning, into the campfire. "Eldic is dead," she says quietly, and it is a long moment before she can continue.

"Ogres attacked our camp last night early in the evening. It was completely unexpected. There are ogres farther east, in the Conquered Lands, but I've never heard of any in Sharlan Park at this time of year. And those who do show up are hungry and furtive—these were vicious and acted enraged. We never had a chance. They killed Eldic and chased me into the trees. I circled back to camp and grabbed what gear I could.

"I had to find you. You were the closest ones who could help. Then I realized the ogres were following me. I stopped now and then, and shot at them with my crossbow when they got too close. It worked well enough to delay them, make them keep their distance. I saw the light from your campfire some time ago through the trees, but it took this long to find your camp. I was moving real quiet so the ogres wouldn't hear me—but I guess they had the same idea, to sneak up on your camp. I came almost face to face with that one here in the dark. I didn't have time to think; I just shot him, then dropped my crossbow and ran. I'm glad you were here."

In her confused encounters with ogres, Derry is uncertain how many there are in all. Six attacked her and Eldic in camp, although Eldic killed one and Derry wounded another. During her cross-country pursuit, she has seen no more than three or four at one time. She knows nothing about the reason for the ogres' presence or their attacks, but vows that they are tenacious and skilled trackers.

Derry has arrived with the oversized ring mail she wears for armor, her light crossbow (which can be recovered in the morning), her sling and remaining bullets. At the first opportunity in daylight, she borrows a hatchet to make another quarterstaff out of a handy sapling. All other gear she and Eldic had have fallen prey to the ogres.

OGRE HELP

If an ogre is taken prisoner (the DM might want to weight things in favor of such an outcome) and is successfully interrogated, bribed, or befriended, it soon becomes clear that these raiders are suffering from a case of mistaken identity. Anishta's party passed through ogre territory two weeks ago. They destroyed an ogre settlement when those creatures tried to stop them from killing the young green dragon they honored as an incarnation of the spirit totem of their clan. After licking their wounds, an ogre raiding party dedicated to revenge set out on the trail of the dragon hunters. In the ensuing period, they lost that trail, thinking it was found again when they crossed the party's tracks.

If any ogres are caught, the talkative one will be the character Gorrim, with the same statistics as the stronger ogre in the encounter above. Gorrim relates information in the following snippets, progressing from angry accusations to explanations of what has him riled up.

"Our tribe have blood-vow against you. We track you here. You hurt us, burn us down, kill our god-spirit. Now we kill you."

"Of course you be the ones. You smell like you did in our home, away there. Well . . . mostly smell the same. Human stink, and elf smell . . . that be the same."

"There be other smells missing—where your friends hiding? The other ogres? And that hurdu lizard?"

Past this point in the conversation, Gorrim can be convinced that he has encountered the wrong party. He roughly describes the members and composition of the dragon hunter party, offering an explanation about the hurdu (see Tekolo's description), and noting that the enemy ogres are not from this region, but are from some unrelated tribe from far away.

Gorrim does not think to apologize for attacking the PCs mistakenly, but does offer a token of friendship—a dried bear claw on a thong, an ogre leader's decoration that will be recognized by others of its kind. If PCs accept this token and show it to any Conquered Lands ogres they may meet, reaction rolls are improved by +3 in favor of the adventurers.


Cooperative relations can be established with Gorrim if the party offers to help the ogres catch up with the dragon hunters. There are a total of 7 ogre raiders at the start of this night-time encounter. If PCs talk persuasively, they can get the entire contingent to join forces with them. With the description given of the dragon hunters' party, PCs might feel they are seriously outnumbered. Joining forces with the ogres will substantially even the odds, and can help avoid encounters with hostile Conquered Lands ogres. However, Gorrim and friends will not automatically cooperate with the PCs. They become angry and uncooperative if threatened, and respond well only to bribes or promises of revenge.

HASLIT VILLAGE

The next morning, when the party reaches the village, read the following:

The smell of wood smoke hangs heavily in the air. It is apparent why when you draw in sight of the still-smoking ruins of the village of Haslit. Where cottages once stood, blackened timbers protrude like skeletal fingers from charred and cracked foundation stones. Perhaps 50 dwellings once stood here, but most of them are now simply piles of smoking debris. Hastily salvaged belongings





are heaped a distance from the burnt-out cottages. Shelters of blankets and salvaged furniture conceal children and adults weary from fruitless fire-fighting. The largest cluster of shanty tents lies at the far end of Haslit, where a two-story barn stands, now a fire-gutted shell with only two walls intact and standing.

Villagers stare as you come closer, looks of curiosity mingled with suspicion on their faces. A portly middle-aged woman in soot-blackened clothing comes forward from the barn. Arms akimbo, she confronts your party. "If you've come for our hospitality, there's none to be had," she declares. "If you've come to kill our dragons, others have beaten you to it. You can be on your way, now."

This stern woman is Emla, the headwoman of the village. She has mistaken the PCs for more dragon hunters, for in her last talk with Anishta she was given to understand that there were more parties of dragon hunters in the area.

Emla (Level 0 Human): STR 14, INT 13, WIS 13, DEX 7, CON 15, CHA 12; AC 10; MV 12; HD 1, hp 5; AL NG; THAC0 20.

Weapon Proficiencies: none.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: government (14), agriculture (13), cooking (13).

Language: Auric.

Emla is a large woman, wearing a patched green work dress and apron. On a leather thong around her neck, she wears a *dragon whistle*. The hand-length-long whistle is carved of bone and was given to Emla by her nephew Tavin, in case the villagers should ever need his help in time of emergency. (See Chapter 7 for details.) Emla used the whistle during the recent fire, but her summons went unanswered.

Emla is usually jovial and outgoing, but rules Haslit with a firm hand. She is like a stern parent to the villagers, a hard-nosed woman of much common sense and a steady temperament. She will listen to reason even when angered, although she likes to shout a lot by way of "discussing" her viewpoint. She respects those who do not back down from her.

As long as Emla and the villagers think the party is out to kill dragons, they offer no help or hospitality, and will only grudgingly point out the path Anishta's group followed away from here. If the player characters have joined forces with the ogres, and Gorrin or his companions are visible, the PCs suffer a +6 penalty to villagers' reaction rolls. If the PCs fail to break through the villagers' reservations, they are set on Anishta's trail and ushered out of the village as soon as possible. In that case, continue play with "The Gap."

Characters can attempt to correct the misconception about their purpose here. Emla is not gullible but will listen to reason. If PCs indicate that they think they are in Rathwyck, the headwoman points out that the border is a day and half's travel to the west, and that the party is now in the Conquered Lands. Players should be able to convince the villagers of the truth with persuasive role-playing.

Once their disassociation from dragon hunters is believed, the adventurers are welcomed by Emla and invited into the barn shelter. There they are given a simple but filling meal while Emla relates the events of the past several days.

"We're not in the habit of turning away travelers. So of course we made Anishta and her friends welcome when they arrived four days ago, even though right off we didn't care for them.

"Anishta claimed to be a priestess of Hith, complete with priestly spells. There was a sullen dwarf with her, a female one—imagine that!—and an elf from Armach, a pinch-faced slyboots if ever I saw one. Then there was a

burly, ugly fellow who looked to be half ogre, and a hurdu from the Steamwall. We didn't know they had five ogres and three of those draconians with them as well, waiting in the woods until their friends were settled in before joining them.

"They made themselves right to home, insisting on staying in the biggest house in Haslit. That was the home of Josef, our miller. They near ate Josef out of house and home, bothered his daughters, ate his dogs. And all the time Anishta grilled Josef about dragons.

"Finally he told her about Gabus and Narn. They're a pair of copper dragons who live atop the Spindle, that rocky spire at the edge of the valley pass. They consider this their territory, but we get on with them. They hunt the wilderness, destroying predators and nasty creatures that would otherwise threaten us here in Haslit. In return, we take them a few fat sheep now and then, and a cow or three in winter. Sometimes we gift them with a little silver, as tribute for their protection.

"When Josef got suspicious about all the questions, Anishta said flat out, 'We're here to kill your dragons,' and showed him a string of dragon ear—trophies from their earlier kills. When the miller told them to leave, the ogres set fire to his house. It carried to the rest of the village right away.

"I asked Anishta and her gang to help fight the fire. They laughed. Josef grabbed for her horse's bridle to stop Anishta from leaving, and she killed him with a spell. Then they grabbed Mies as they left, Josef's wife. She's our midwife, and known to the dragons from tribute time. The half-ogre said, 'Follow, and she's dead.'

"That was two days ago. We stayed and fought the fire. But we want Mies back, and we want the dragons safe, if they're still alive. And we want those dragon hunters stopped!"

If the PCs need any encouragement, Emla does her best to bargain with the party and persuade them to help the villagers by rescuing Mies and foiling the dragon hunters' plans. The villagers do not have great material wealth, but a reward of 1,000 sp can be scraped together.

If asked about it, Emla describes her *dragon whistle* and explains that her nephew Tavin is partner to the male dragon Gabus, who took Narn as his mate only a few years ago. She suggests that Tavin can help the adventurers and explains where to find his dwelling at the base of the Spindle.

The headwoman adds, "I used that whistle when I realized the whole village was in danger. But the dragons didn't come to help us. I'm worried what that might mean."

The village has little in the way of supplies or equipment to offer the characters, considering the devastation they have withstood. In fact, many villagers are burned or suffering from smoke inhalation, and can use whatever healing aid the adventurers can contribute. No one can be persuaded to accompany the adventurers, for Anishta's gang has succeeded in intimidating the villagers by their crude actions.

The trail to the Spindle is clearly marked, and PCs are easily able to find their way. Once the party is ready to move on, proceed with "The Gap."

THE GAP

Distrustful of established trails and leery of possible pursuit by villagers, Anishta and company made their way cross-country to the Spindle. PCs should be able to find enough NPC tracks to keep them headed in the right direction, but not enough to give definite numbers or hints about the group's composition.

The party must move through the woodlands and rocky foothills that stretch eastward of Wyvern Valley in order to reach the Gap, a visible notch in the flanking valley ridges. The Spindle is a thin rocky spire that towers over the eastern side of the Gap. The adventurers can reach the Gap in a 10-hour trek from Haslit. After a night's rest, it takes an additional four hours to ascend from the Gap to the base of the Spindle. To reach the dragons' lair requires three more hours of hiking and climbing on foot. The Spindle towers over the surrounding terrain, and PCs should be able to see their destination at most times during their journey.

THE SPINDLE

Sunbaked rock and wind-carved boulders are scattered along the shoulder of the ridge leading to the Spindle. This stoney finger which stretches to the spire's base supports no trees or bushes. Here there is only rugged stone and cracked boulders, swept by the wind gusting upward through the nearby Gap.

The trail to the Spindle appears to lead up a rocky, barren ridgeline. Unbeknownst to the characters, the dragon hunters passed this way heading back down only a few hours ago. The priestess and her companions were delayed in their retreat from the dragons' lair by raiding ogres and the vengeance-seeking Gabus. In order to conceal their passage and delay pursuit, Anishta cast *hallucinatory terrain* (from a scroll) on this part of the trail.

This illusion is in effect when PCs arrive in the area. The real trail to the Spindle descends a sheer dropoff into a ravine, then ascends the opposite side in a series of switchbacks. With the ravine concealed by the illusion, it appears that the pathway is a continuous rocky spine, stretching gradually up into the base of the Spindle. The dragon hunters escaped Gabus under cover of this illusion, which also lured ogres to their death when they fell through the illusionary trail to the ground below.

Tavin Longspear (6th level human dragon knight)
STR 15, INT 12, WIS 13, DEX 9, CON 12, CHA 17; AC 5; MV 12; HD WA6, hp 36; AL N; THACO 15 (14 with lance).

Weapon Proficiencies: medium lance (specialized), spear, heavy crossbow (specialized: 1/2).

Nonweapon Proficiencies: dragon riding (13), hunting (12), animal lore (12), fire-building (12), mountaineering, weather sense (12).

Languages: Auric, Copper Dragon (12), Hoor (12).

Armor: *studded leather* +2, leather helm.

Weapons: *medium lance* +1 (in dragon lair), spear, heavy crossbow, dagger, 5 +1 *crossbow bolts*, 24 normal crossbow bolts.

Magical Items: *potion of dragon sight*, *boots of striding and springing*.

Special Abilities: immune to dragon awe; immune to dragon fear; he has no penalty due to flight when using crossbow or lance from dragon-back.

Tavin is tall and slim, a rugged human of middle years with sandy brown hair and a tanned face. He spends much time scouting woodlands and the airways, part of the regular patrol which ensures the security of the nearby Dragon Knight settlement.

He is suspicious of strangers, but affable enough when convinced there is no threat to the safety of his fellow knights or dragons.

If ogres have allied themselves with the player characters, ascertain the order of march. If the ogres are in the forefront, they stumble into this illusion first, and the first ogre or two should be allowed to plummet out of sight for dramatic effect. If a player character encounters the false trail first, the adventurer should be allowed to attempt to see through the illusion, if appropriate, and to make a DEX check to save himself from a terrible fall. Characters dropping off the edge of the ravine suffer 8d6 points of damage from the fall. The ravine can be crossed by using the normal trail once it is discovered.

TAVIN LONGSPEAR

When the party reaches the far side of the ravine, they are close to the base of the Spindle. At that point, read the following out loud:

The pathway slopes steeply upward before you. Ahead, there is slight movement behind one of the boulders; one tumbles down the stoney trail, then several cascade after. Suddenly a crossbow bolt hisses through the air and bounces off the rock at your feet. A man's voice shouts from the concealment of the rocks. "Go back!" the stranger cries angrily. "You have no business here. One more step and you're dead!"

Tavin Longspear is a dragon knight, the bond partner of Gabus. While off trading with woodsmen near Haslit, the knight sensed something amiss with Gabus and the dragon's mate. He was on his way to investigate when he ran into ogres on the mountainside. Tavin saw Anishta and her party moving down the ravine in the distance; the dragon knight is convinced that something is very wrong, and now that the player characters have come upon him from the rear, he is certain of it. There are never so many intruders in Gabus' territory, and the fact that the mated dragons have not yet responded to the trespassers bodes ill. Tavin's hostility toward the PCs persists until he is convinced of their good intentions, or until the encounter with Gabus.

Gabus (young adult copper dragon)
AC -2; MV 9, Fl 30 (C), Jp 3; HD 13, hp 78; #AT 3 + specials (snatch up to L size; kick 1d6 + 5 feet; wing buffet 1d6 + 5 hp); Dmg 1d6 + 5/1d6 + 5/5d4 + 5; AL CG; INT high; Size G (45' body, 35' tail); THACO 8 (+2 on claw attack if diving); SA acid breath (70' long x 5' x 5'; Dmg 10d6 + 5, save for half damage), gas breath which slows victim for 15 minutes (30' long x 20' x 20'), can breathe once every 3 rds; fear within 10 yds.—save vs. petrification or fight at -2 (to hit and dmg) (but 5 main dragon hunters immune to this fear because of prolonged exposure to dragons); SD MR 10%.

Inherent powers: *spider climb* (on stone), *neutralize poison* (three times a day), *stone shape* (twice daily); immune to acid.

Spells (cast at 12th level):

1st: *detect magic*.

3rd: *flame arrow*.

Nonweapon proficiencies: ancient history (16), appraising (14).

Languages: Copper Dragon, Auric (14), Marak Kender (14), Bronze Dragon (14), Hitehkel Gnomish (14).

This dragon is bold and blunt-spoken, willing to bargain if he is in a position of strength. He is normally even-tempered but is capricious and impulsive, rarely taking council with anyone but himself.





Tavin has 90% concealment behind the boulders, and can easily dislodge PCs from the path with a cascade of loose stones. Boulders can be tumbled down the path once per round, hitting PCs on a roll of 14 or greater. Boulders do 1d6 points of damage, and any PC struck must make a successful DEX check to avoid being swept off the path and over the ravine edge.

The dragon knight is in the perfect position to delay PCs in this spot indefinitely. There is no way past his position unless PCs can fly, or are proficient in Mountain Climbing and have appropriate gear with them. Tavin volunteers no information about himself, and parleys with hostility; he is suspicious of strangers in the area. After a few minutes of questioning PCs about their intentions, he decides to summon Gabus and put an end to this standoff.

When Tavin blows his dragon whistle, it fails to summon Gabus, who is too furious to pay attention to it. Regardless of what actions the PCs are taking (if any), Tavin should remain uninjured and free to move at this point, for after a few rounds, Gabus shows up completely on his own. The dragon is out of control, and attacks as explained below.

DRAGON RAGE

Before PCs can take drastic action against Tavin, their activities are interrupted by Gabus, the copper dragon who is Tavin's bond-partner.

From the skies overhead comes an odd sound: a boom like canvas cracking in the wind. A glance upward reveals the source—a copper dragon, slipping in and out of sight behind low-lying clouds, the snap of his powerful wings boosting his flight. The creature moves restlessly in a great circle about the Spindle, but on this circuit, he spies your party and lets out a bone-shuddering screech. Clapping leathern wings to his sides, the dragon plummets toward you out of the sky.

Gabus has just returned from a hunting foray to find his mate dead in their cavern lair atop the Spindle. In his absence, Anishta and the dragon hunters have been here. Accompanied by Mies the midwife, their village hostage, the hunters gained admittance to the lair with no difficulty. They attacked Narr at once, taking her by surprise before her suspicions could be aroused by Mies' nervous behavior.

Enthused by the chance to grab a few choice pieces of loot, Anishta and her people disregarded Mies, cowering in shock in a corner of the cavern. Positive the midwife posed no threat to them, the hunters took some treasure and the dragon's left ear as proof of their kill, then left the cave. When Gabus returned a few hours later, he saw his dead mate and the obvious workings of human hands. The copper dragon was stunned and enraged. He has just left his cave intent on vengeance.

Gabus is acting out of rage and grief, and his reasoning and behavior are not normal at this time. This is evident to Tavin, who realizes something is gravely amiss, but the player characters will have no way to judge this.

The PCs are in a fairly exposed position on the edge of the ravine, with nowhere to hide. Gabus is not fooled by the illusionary trail, for he knows this terrain intimately. In this initial encounter, the dragon sights the PCs on the ravine edge, and swoops in to attack indiscriminately.

DRAGON TACTICS

Gabus makes a first pass over the adventurers, spraying them with acid breath. He circles high for a couple of min-

utes, then swoops back for a second pass, this time blasting the single biggest group of survivors with gas breath to slow them. If the party attacks with missile weapons at any time, he unleashes a *flame arrow* at each of the two most obvious opponents: i.e., one who is unconcealed, or who attacks Gabus or makes a movement that catches the dragon's eye. If more than two opponents fall in this category, the dragon casts his spell at the two closest, then swoops in to attack the next closest with his talons.

Gabus will land and fight on the ground only if his opponents appear to be wounded and weakened as a fighting force. If it does not seem safe to land, he continues to fly in swooping circles, snatching at PCs with his talons as he dashes by.

If any PCs are in danger of being overwhelmed and killed by the dragon, two distractions occur to take Gabus' attention away from them. First, Tavin blows his dragon whistle. PCs can see the stranger put something to his mouth and blow, but they will hear no sound.

When this happens, Gabus glances briefly in Tavin's direction, but the whistle has no other effect. At the same time, as the dragon glances Spindle-ward, he sees Mies picking her way down the lair trail, and immediately concludes that the lone human had something to do with the murder of his mate. Gabus breaks off his attack on the player characters and flies, roaring, directly at Mies. When that happens, read the following out loud:

A stooped and elderly woman picks her way gingerly down the Spindle trail high overhead. You notice her at the same time the dragon does. With a roar, the copper dragon breaks off his attack and flies directly at the old woman, talons outstretched. Only a timely duck behind a boulder saves her from the enraged creature. The dragon veers away in a great circle, reorienting for another pass at her.

If PCS spoke with Emla in the village of Haslit, they realize the woman fits the description of Mies, the midwife who was taken hostage by the dragon hunters. With Gabus' frenzied arrival and departure, Mies was prodded back into motion. Shocked and horrified at recent events, she left the cavern in a daze and started along the precipitous trail which leads down the Spindle. She is there, exposed and oblivious to the dragon, when Gabus spots her. The dragon knows the midwife, but does not recognize her in the heat of the moment and attacks blindly.

If the PCs want to enact a plan to save Mies, let them do so. At the first sign of interference from them, or after a fruitless effort to grab the midwife out of her rocky hiding place, Gabus turns his attentions back to the PCs. He settles at the foot of the Spindle, above the party but below Tavin, ready to confront the adventurers on the ground.

INTERVENTION

As the dragon attacks Mies, PCs notice the stranger shouting at the dragon. The language is a foreign one; only characters who speak Copper Dragon will understand Tavin's words. The man is warning Gabus away from Mies, shouting, "Let her alone! Gabus, talk to me! What's wrong? Calm down and talk, you overgrown dragonturtle!"

Of course, Gabus bears no resemblance to a dragonturtle. The remark is an inside joke, a friendly insult intended to get the copper dragon's attention. This tactic fails, and Tavin grows increasingly frustrated over his helplessness in communicating with his apparently berserk partner.

When Gabus settles at the cliff foot and faces off against the

player characters, Tavin has had enough. He leaps from his place of concealment and runs directly toward the copper dragon, who has his back to the man. Observant PCs can easily see Tavin charging unarmed toward the dragon. If the PCs are taking hostile action against the dragon, Tavin shouts in Auric, "Don't fight him! Don't fight him!" Regardless what attacks the characters might be launching against the dragon, Tavin continues his charge. Throughout this encounter, both he and Gabus should remain unhurt or barely injured by the PCs' actions.

Before the copper dragon can attack, the stranger scrambles up Gabus' flank from the rear and flings himself into a seated position on the dragon's back. His legs, clad in thigh-high boots, grip the dragon at the base of the neck. The creature's head swings up in surprise, its whole body taut and motionless as it cocks its head, regarding the man out of one large and glaring eye. There is tension in the air as dragon and man lock gazes—then the copper-hued creature shudders, exhales a great sigh, and settles down beneath the reassuring touch of his knight.

If PCs are still intent on attacking man or dragon, Tavin alternates his attentions between Gabus and the PCs. To the dragon he repeats reassuring words in the tongue of copper dragons ("It's all right, Gabus, I'm here, everything will be fine now"). To the adventurers he says anything necessary to allay their fears and get them off of the offensive. ("Don't shoot! We mean you no harm; something's wrong and Gabus is upset," etc.).

If PCs are placated by this, Tavin shouts an all clear to Mies, who joins the group. Mies and Tavin converse with the party as described below. If the characters attack instead, dragon and knight take flight. Gabus deposits Tavin on the Spindle path near Mies' hiding place, then the dragon settles on a lookout perch high atop the Spindle.

At the earliest opportunity, Mies makes her way on down the Spindle and vouches for Tavin and Gabus, reassuring the adventurers that man and dragon are friends and can be trusted. She likewise reassures Gabus and his knight that these humans are not the ones responsible for the murder of his mate. Other information the midwife can offer is detailed below.

This encounter should not be played as if Gabus were a "tame" dragon. He has never been subdued, and does not interact with Tavin as if the human is in control. It is only the reassuring presence of his friend that has had a calming effect on the dragon. In all regards Gabus remains an independent, intelligent entity who looks upon the adventurers with suspicion and distrust, until he learns the truth of matters from Mies.

EXPLANATIONS AND NEWS

As soon as a dialogue is possible between the NPCs and the adventurers, read the following out loud:

"I'm Tavin," the stranger nods to you curtly. "Forgive my hastiness earlier. I sensed something was wrong here, then saw intruders, and assumed the worst. I wanted to keep you away from the dragons' cave." A grim expression barely hides the sorrow the man feels over the death of his dragon's mate.

"But Tavin," speaks Mies, the elderly midwife from Haslit, "the damage was already done. Narn was slain by those dragon hunters. They took me along, knowing she would think them friendly folk if I was with them. And she did. . . ." The old woman hangs her head, tearful over her unintended treachery.

Tavin pulls a long moustache as he looks from Mies to Gabus. It is the dragon who faces your party and says in a basso voice, "We must go. Tavin and I must find these murderers before they get too far away. Perhaps you could escort Mies back to Haslit for us?"

This dialogue should be used as an entree to allow PCs to explain that they are also on the trail of the dragon hunters. If PCs establish a rapport with Tavin and Gabus, the dragon and his knight will join forces with the player characters for the rest of this adventure. Their assistance can prove invaluable in completing the PCs' mission. The events which follow this encounter assume that such a partnership has come about. If that is not the case, alter subsequent events accordingly. However, this adventure will be significantly more difficult to complete without the cooperation of Gabus and his knight. The pair will also take Mies back to Haslit that night, rather than delay the party by over a day in escorting her back.

Role-play the conversation between dragon, knight, and the PCs. Once the party's interest in the dragon hunters is clear, Tavin and Gabus offer to work with them to bring the hunters to justice. It should be obvious that this "justice" will be quick reprisal for the destruction of Haslit and the death of Narn. If PCs want to take any of the dragon hunters captive or interrogate them, this conversation is the time to negotiate that treatment with Tavin and Gabus. The pair avoid promising not to harm the dragon hunters. They will, however, agree to capture rather than kill them.

KNIGHT REVEALED

At an appropriate point in the conversation, have Derry interject a question to Tavin, such as "Why do you know this dragon so well?" To this or similar queries from PCs, Tavin draws himself up proudly and declares, "I am a Dragon Knight." He volunteers information about his elite occupation as described in Chapter 7.

Once this explanation is given, note to the players that Derry seems particularly fascinated by the dragon knight. She goes out of her way to stand nearby, stares with interest at Tavin's gear, and even fearfully sidles up so she can stand closer to Gabus. This curiosity is tolerated by dragon and knight, who are likewise tolerant of similar interest by PCs.

While Mies is being returned to the village, PCs can make camp at the base of the Spindle. Just before midnight, Tavin and Gabus return to the Spindle cave to tend to their personal business. The next morning they will be ready to join the player characters as they continue their pursuit of Anishta and her dragon hunters.

DRAGON FLIGHT

As the PCs are waking up next morning, read the following out loud:

The setting orb of Solais, the only moon in the sky, is obscured by rain-laden clouds lying black and low where the Spindle rises above the distant Gap. Several figures move through the sky outward from that point, barely discernable in the early light. Suggestions of wings and the forms of riders are glimpsed before the flight is swallowed up in cloud cover.

One figure strays from the group, winging its way rapidly toward the base of the Spindle. In moments, Gabus lands on a smooth ledge of rock nearby. Tavin Longspear is mounted aback the dragon, strapped securely into a sturdy saddle bearing a gimbel-mounted shield and lance.



The haggard knight nods grimly as your party gathers round.

"Those murderers will be found," Tavin says curtly. "Other dragons seek them out now; they cannot hide for long. Since you track them on the ground, I'll come back to you as Gabus and I scout. Between air and land, we should have them soon enough."

Gabus turns a cold eye upon you. "Good hunting," the dragon says in a raspy, accented basso voice. "If you find them first, do not forget to share the kill."

If PCs are not inclined to question dragon or knight, Tavin and Gabus take off after this abrupt comment. Otherwise, although they are anxious to get underway, Tavin will linger to answer any reasonable questions the PCs may have about the plans to track down Anishta and the dragon hunters. Use the information below to tailor Tavin's response to the PCs' queries.

—When Tavin returned to Gabus' lair the previous night, the full tragedy of Narn's death was plain to see. Man and dragon swore vengeance, a inviolable oath binding the two. Tavin shared news of Narn's death with his companions in Carrendown, a dragon knight settlement northwest of the Spindle. The other knights have flown out this morning to assist with quartering the area and searching out the dragon hunters. Dragons gathered early this morning at the Spindle to get the scent of the murderers. Vigilante justice prevails among the dragons and their knights; when the interlopers are found, they will be slain mercilessly.

—Most knights rely on the sharp sight and sense of smell of the dragons to detect the intruders under all but the densest cover of the forest canopy. However, since people on the

ground can obviously shelter themselves in certain places from an aerial search, Tavin has a special interest in the adventuring party's ability to track the poachers on the ground. Tavin will maintain close contact with the party, checking in with them at least once every hour, between flying spiral search patterns and similar forays over the local countryside. In fact, the searching of other NPC dragons and knights has no practical impact on the course of the PCs' own endeavors, since it is the PCs, Tavin, and Gabus who eventually track down the dragon hunters.

—The distant figures seen in the morning sky were additional copper dragons and knights from Carrendown. The existence of this community of dragon knights is a little-advertised fact; Haslit villagers aren't familiar with that area, and Tavin will not divulge details. If PCs are curious about what they have just witnessed, they should at most come away with an impression that there are, indeed, more dragons and knights somewhere in the area—ones who are coordinating the search with Tavin and Gabus. Further details about Carrendown or its inhabitants will be revealed only to a close friend or dragon knight candidate, neither of which the PCs should be at this point in the adventure.

—Tavin has scouted the area around the Spindle, and can easily point out to the PCs the trail left by Anishta and her party. The dragon hunters fled the Spindle area in a hurry, taking care mainly to guard their tracks against pursuit by ogres, whom they knew were on their trail. Their tracks on the ground are easy to find at first.

Any attempts by the PCs to get Derry to remain behind will fail. The young Lady of Rathwyck is resourceful and persistent; if she is kept in Haslit by force, allow her to escape and rejoin the party when they are hot on the trail of their quarry.



CHAPTER 3: DEEP FOREST



DM's OVERVIEW

On the trail through Deep Forest, the party runs a gauntlet of traps—some set by the dragon hunters, others by forest creatures aroused by the hunters' passing. In particular, it becomes increasingly apparent that faeriefolk are resentful of their presence.

If any of the PCs escape the final trap, a moonlit hulder revel, they track the hunters to the Pillars of the Moons, an ancient focus of power. But before the two parties can spring at each other, the hulderfolk silently move in and take every-one captive.

THE COURSE OF PURSUIT

Once tracking is under way, it is evident that the poachers have followed a circuitous, winding path designed to lose any pursuit. Their route is chosen in a way which maximizes concealment, with a constantly changing direction of travel.

On the ground, PCs make proficiency checks once each hour, in the same way and using the same modifiers described in "Following the Trail" (p. 7) to see how well they are tracking the dragon hunters. Additional negative modifiers should be applied to player characters with flying mounts, since aerial pursuit is not as efficient in this terrain as ground searching. Successful checks indicate that PCs are closer to the hunters than the hunters expect; characters also gain a chance to detect Anishta's rearguard scouts, and thus may avoid or thwart an ambush attempt along the way. If their checks are unsuccessful, the adventurers will still run into the NPCs, but the dragon hunters will have the upper

hand in the encounter.

The PCs progress in this situation is primarily hindered by two types of trap: those laid by the poachers to slow or discourage pursuit, and those set by pestiferous hulderfolk, whose attention has been drawn by the hunters' trespass through their territory. Encounters described below are one or the other of these types. In addition, more wilderness encounters (described on pp. 10-11) can take place. The number of encounters played can be set so the results are as challenging or simple for the party as the DM sees fit.


CHECKING IN

As noted earlier, Tavin and Gabus rejoin the adventurers periodically to check on their progress and share news from the dragon knights who are also searching for Anishta's party of killers. Gabus is preoccupied with his own thoughts and stays aloof from the PCs, leaving it to his knight to do most of the communication in these brief meetings.

During most of Tavin's contacts with the group he has nothing significant to report. At intervals, however, he shares the following bits of information. These bits can be elaborated on in roleplaying conversation as the DM sees fit. A brief explanation follows each statement, to put the information in context for the DM. This additional clarification should not be shared with the player characters.

"Parties of ogres are hunting these woodlands. We've never seen so many this far from their home territories. Be cautious, lest they come upon you unawares."





Tavin and his friends have spotted raiding parties from ogre villages ruined by the dragon hunters' binge of destruction. If the PCs did not speak with ogres in their earlier encounter(s), a random encounter with these raiders can be played. In this way the PCs might learn additional information about their opponents' misdeeds, and will have a chance to gain the assistance of ogres.

Any such encounter should play as described under "More Ogres" (p. 10).

"We found a young brass dragon slain out of hand. His death was recent, but too far to the north to be the doing of those we pursue. It appears that others are also slaying dragons—and I want to know why."

Others are indeed slaying dragons; it is merest chance that another party of bounty hunters is working so close to Anishta's territory that their work was detected by Tavin and his friends. The presence of more dragon hunters should suggest to the PCs that Anishta and her group are merely part of a larger picture.

"One of our scouts looked further in the area where we found the slain dragon. He was treacherously attacked by magical lightning, but his assailant remained hidden in trees. Others are searching that area intensively now."

The scout came dangerously close to the other party of dragon hunters and was attacked by them. This diversion draws off most of the dragon knights. If PCs assume the knights have found their quarry and want to head for that area, Tavin will go along with them. Before the party can go far off track, however, let them stumble into the wasp nest ambush which Anishta's gang has laid for them.

INTO THE FOREST

As the party sets out from Spindle Gap, read the following to them:

Your quarry's trail wends into the forest land roughly east of the Spindle. The terrain descends from the rocky heights of the Gap and falls in forested steppes into a densely-wooded valley basin. Going is slow, for the trail is faint and the way is blocked by snags, deadwood, bramble patches, and close-grown trees. Tavin and Gabus can be glimpsed overhead now and then; they meet you at intervals, landing in the boggy meadows surrounding scattered ponds in this area.

The following encounters take place at about the times specified, but only when PCs are accurately following the NPCs' trail. The party must make a successful Tracking or Hunting check after each encounter in order to proceed to the next encounter. To begin, they must make at least one successful check before playing the first encounter, "Detecting the Rearguard."

MIDMORNING:

DETECTING THE REARGUARD

Peculiar footprints catch your eye. Two beings with three thick-clawed toes have been here—recently. The fresh tracks clearly show that the creatures who made them

were walking back in your direction within the last few hours.

Efforts to run these track-makers to ground come to naught, but this evidence should put PCs on their guard and improves their chances of prevailing in the ambush Anishta has arranged for them.

If the party makes at least one successful check in each of the next three hours, run them through "Draconians." Otherwise, they aren't following as closely as they might be—run them through "Wasp Trap." (Don't run them through both of these encounters.)

MID-AFTERNOON:

DRACONIANS

Any Hunting or Tracking check which succeeds by 6 (beyond the regular penalties) permits PCs to sneak up to within 100 feet of the draconians' location without being detected. Otherwise, they are detected. If this happens, or if PCs move in more closely, determine surprise and initiative in the regular manner. If draconians have surprise, do not read the following description to the PCs. If they don't, characters observe the scene described below.

Two reptilian-snouted figures are busy about a task on the trail ahead. Their legs are bowed; their three-toed feet and vestigial tails make them resemble nothing you have seen before. Their body proportions are wrong, with broad hunched shoulders, oddly-muscled legs, and prominent knee joints. Their skin is a leathery hide of dusky silver. They wear chain mail with crossbows slung on their backs, out of the way of the awkward maneuvering they are engaged in.

One of the creatures handles a pole with a rope dangling from the end, the line looped about a basket-sized lump of mottled mud and twigs. The second figure maneuvers the line, attempting to balance the mud-ball atop an overhead tree limb. A small iron pot rests on the ground beside the tree. The creatures are engrossed in their task and do not notice your presence.

Only if PCs have encountered draconians before will they recognize these creatures as such. In this part of Taladas, draconians are rare, and those who are found here are the deformed dregs of the draconian army raised and marshaled for wars elsewhere on Krynn. These draconians are less deformed than some, their handicaps being ones of facial structure and slightly greater-than-normal arm length, but their crooked, evil grins are still difficult to face.

A third draconian is out of sight from the PCs' initial vantage point. (Only two sets of tracks were seen earlier on the trail, because one of the three wasn't in that stretch of path at the same time as his companions.) It is this third draconian who may notice the PCs' approach in a surprise situation and alert his fellows to take the offensive. If PCs dash in to attack when they spot the first two draconians, the third attacks with surprise from his concealed perimeter position. He fights for two melee rounds before needing to check morale.

If PCs interrupt the draconians at their task, they may have a rude surprise. The rearguard is stringing up a wasp's nest over their back trail, but have yet to secure it and run a trigger line. The iron pot on the ground was used as a smudge pot to smoke the wasps into a dazed state, but its contents are now burned out and there is little hint of its function from its appearance alone.

If either draconian is injured or surprised while manipulating the nest, it plunges to the ground and shatters apart. Otherwise it takes one more minute to secure the nest in the tree limbs.

If the nest is dropped, this is enough to rouse the wasps from the smoke-dazed state which has kept them quiet so far. Roused wasps attack everyone within a 100 yard radius and pursue characters who flee. The details of a wasp attack are given in "Wasp Trap," below; however, these smoke-dazed wasps move at 2/3 their normal speed.

Each of these draconians is equipped with a crossbow and short sword. Only the third draconian has his bow loaded and ready to fire (at Short range) into the party. If the draconians are outnumbered, they make morale checks as appropriate during the course of their fight. Their statistics are given with the other dragon hunters.

If any draconians are captured and questioned, they can reveal any or all information they would logically know about Anishta's operation (see NPC descriptions and DM Background). However, draconians are surly and insolent and volunteer nothing. Threat of death makes them answer direct questions with minimal information. They lie freely unless intimidated or charmed into truthfulness, or as otherwise determined by the DM.

Remember to skip "Wasp Trap"; the next encounter ("Amazing Scenery") occurs after a night's rest.

MID-AFTERNOON:

WASP TRAP

Hanging in the branches overhead is a nest of wasps. It has been loosened from its original mounting on a different tree, and is balanced precariously here to endanger anyone who pursues the dragon hunters. If stepped upon, a concealed trigger line will shake the branch, dislodging the nest, which will then crash to the ground. The wasps within will boil forth when their home is destroyed and attack any living creatures in the area.

Some PCs have a chance of identifying this trap before they trigger it: those with Set Snares (at -2), Tracking (at -4), Hunting (at -6), or Finding Traps (at -10%). As in all other situations of this sort, the DM should make any necessary checks himself, so that the party isn't alerted to the presence of potential danger.

This setup can be described to the PCs if the trap is detected and avoided. If not, there is a 20% chance for each PC who passes this spot to set off the trap. The falling wasp nest lands within 10 feet of from the character who triggered the trap. If this happens, read the following out loud:

A large object plummets to the ground a short distance away. You have only a glimpse of dried mud and bits of dried leaves before the projectile bursts apart. But the flying fragments do not all fall to the ground. An angry buzz assaults your ears as a cloud of milling insects swirls up and out from the debris—and darts to the attack toward you.

Wasps (100): AC 2; MV 1, Fl 18 (B); HD 1/2, hp 1 each; #AT 1, Dmg 1 plus poison; AL N; THACO 20.

Each ordinary wasp can attempt to sting once per round, although its poison is exhausted after four attempts. In the segment that a wasp is stinging a character, it is motionless and its AC drops to 9. Each time a character is stung and fails to save against Poison, he suffers a +1 THACO penalty, up to a maximum of +5. For each poison save that fails thereafter, the PC must make a successful Constitution check to avoid falling unconscious.

It is possible to flee the wasps by running more than 100 yards from the fallen nest, or by submerging oneself in one of the ponds which are common in this area. Whether or not a PC can reach a pond before suffering serious injury by these stinging insects is for the DM to determine. *Sleep* spells and other magical defenses can be of use. Any character who stays close to the site of the shattered nest is swarmed by the maddened insects and could conceivably be killed by them.

EVENING:

MUD-MEN OF THE MARSH

Anishta's party stopped for a water break at a pond and had a near-fatal encounter with the mud-men who inhabited that body of water. Leaving the pond, Anishta cast the final *hallucinatory* terrain from her scroll, to lure the pursuit she is increasingly worried about into the mud-men's grip. Read the following out loud:

The dragon hunters' trail leads past several boggy ponds, then ascends a grassy slope to the hill crest. Their tracks are more clearly seen along this stretch of trail than anywhere else. It appears they have passed by just a few hours ago.

Make proficiency checks for all characters with Hunting (at -6) or Tracking (at -3). Anyone who makes a successful check has a chance to notice the anomalies in this scene. Similarly, characters who can detect traps (at -25%) or illusions have a chance to notice things that are amiss. Read the following to observant characters who notice these things:

Although the poachers have concealed their footprints well along the way, in this spot there has been no effort at concealment at all. And though the prints seen here are the right size, shape, and number, the depth of depression is not quite what a tracker expects for the condition of this damp soil. Too, although the ground slopes up the hillside, the soil is no less damp and takes the prints just as clearly as near the boggy ponds in the valley floor.

Give the PCs no hint as to the meaning of these clues. If they suspect they are following a false trail and parallel its course anyway, they run into the mud-men as described below. If they suspect an illusion, determine in the normal manner whether or not they see through it. If they don't see through it, and they continue in this general direction, they encounter the mud-men. If they do pierce the illusion, read the following:

The grassy slope is not what it appears to be. Rather, it is flat, not sloping at all: a continuation of the valley bottom through which the trail has led. The illusionary path leads into and through a shallow marshy pond which lies directly ahead. The real tracks of the dragon hunters can be seen in the damp ground, somewhat less distinctly than in the illusion. The real tracks also lead into the pond, but then exit it shortly after.

If PCs want to investigate the pond, and step foot within its watery outer fringe, they excite the attack of the mud-men. This also happens if they do not see through the illusion and simply follow the trail.



MUD/SLINGING

Read the following one round after PCs step into the mud man pond:

A squishing noise and swish of water draws your attention to the water surface ahead of you. With a sucking sound, a hulking form of mud rises out of the ground. One shapeless limb swings back, and a paw hurls a glob of gooey mud directly at you.

If PCs were deluded by the illusionary ground up to this point, the illusion can be seen for what it is once the mud-man rises through it. Inform the characters they are calf-deep in water, 20 feet from the shore, in a marshy pond 100 feet across. Determine initiative as the mud-man attacks. The other 5 mud-men form 1 round after the first. Note that the attack ceases immediately if all characters leave the water.

Mud-men (6): AC 10; MV 3; HD 2, hp 16, 14, 13, 12, 10, 9; #AT 1; Dmg special; Size S; AL N; THAC0 19. SA mud throwing, suffocation. SD immune to poisons, unaffected by spells that affect the mind (e.g., *hold*, *charm*, *sleep*). Mud-men are affected by all spells which damage living creatures. *Transmute mud to rock* kills all mud-men within its area of effect (no save allowed); *dispel magic* and *dig* act as *fireballs* cast at the same level as the mage.

Mud-men attack by hurling mud at their opponents, who are considered AC 10 (plus Dexterity modifiers) for determining hits. Mud hardens on impact and slows the victim's movement rate by 1 if hit. The mud-man moves at full rate toward its victim as it attacks; within 10 feet it hurls itself (literally) at the victim. A successful hit means the death of the mud-man, but slows the victim's movement by 4. If this attack misses, the mud-man spends the next round reforming in order to attack again. Mud-men do not pursue beyond the limit of the pool.

Once a victim's movement is reduced to 0, he becomes immobilized and suffocates, suffering 1d8 points of damage per round until the mouth or nose is clear. The victim dies of suffocation in five rounds unless rescued. Mud can be removed from nose and mouth in one round; movement can then be restored at a rate of 1 per five rounds.

In the bottom of the mud-men's pool is a pack dropped by one of Kohver's ogres. It contains mostly water-damaged foodstuffs, but in the bottom of it is a small pouch holding 3,000 stl worth of unset, uncut gemstones taken from dragon victims. The pack is not visible if the pond water is murky from churned-up mud and silt. In still water it can be clearly seen by anyone standing at least 20 feet in from the shore of the pond.

MID-MORNING:

AMAZING SCENERY

The trail you follow circles a rocky knoll and winds between gnarled oak trees. But the faint tracks soon vanish, leaving you with no clue about which direction to take. Inviting natural pathways lead off between the oaks, but there is no certainty about which one to follow. Indeed, as you look about, it is impossible to tell exactly which trail led into this oak grove.

As PCs pursue their quarry, both adventurers and dragon hunters are unwittingly moving deeper and deeper into hulderfolk territory, which begins some distance to the east

of the Spindle. The elusive elves have had their eye on these intruders for some time already, and are now getting serious about chasing these people away. Here the party loses the trail because this portion of it is cloaked by a hulderfolk *maze* spell. Normal efforts to track or find a way out of this grove will fail until characters see through the maze effect.

With the exceptions noted below, the hulderfolk *maze* spell is identical to the 4th level Priest spell, *hallucinatory forest*, cast at the 9th level of skill. However, this spell creates a piece of terrain which magically blinds persons to pathways leading out of it. Characters may save against Spell if they suspect or realize that they are in enchanted terrain (druids and other beings attuned with nature will be able to realize the hallucinatory character of their surroundings). A successful save indicates that they can find their way out of the bespelled region.

Characters who can fly can leave the area of spell effect at an elevation twice the height of the treetops (i.e., at 100 feet), although the tendency will be to turn back before reaching that point. If it is necessary to free PCs from the oak grove, Tavin and Gabus can guide them out of the area, for the dragon can easily see through this illusion. There is no sign of hulderfolk in the area once PCs win free of the trap.

NOON:

GRAB IT AND RUN . . .

The party wanders into an area where hulderfolk have prevailed upon pixies to help drive these strangers away from their hidden realm. The objective of the pixies is to harass the party by stealing their belongings. While this mischief is sure to amuse the pixies, they also hope the adventurers will retreat from the threat of being plundered into destitution.

Thick underbrush and close-grown trees give way to sun-filled meadows. Waist-high grasses grow on gentle hill slopes among oak and ash and scattered pines. One swath of meadow pasture is awash with small purple wildflowers, their bell-shaped blossoms swaying in the warm breeze.

Suddenly, tittering laughter comes from all around. High-pitched voices giggle from the grasses, from among the wildflowers, even from mid-air-but the creatures who make these sounds cannot be seen. Then the voices fall silent. Without warning, invisible fingers tug at belts and packs, trying to make off with anything that can be grabbed.

Pixies (5): AC 5; MV 6, FI 12 (B); HD (FRA) 1/2, hp 5, 4, 4, 3, 3; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL N; THAC0 20 (16 for arrows); SA can cause confusion by touch at will (save vs. spell to negate; permanent until *remove curse* applied), can cast each once per day: *dispel magic*, *dancing lights*, and *ESP*, can create audial and visual illusion which lasts without concentration till magically dispelled; SD (each once per day) can become visible, polymorph self, and know alignment. All spells are cast as at 8th level.

If a pixie fails to save vs. *dispel magic* (resisting as 8th level magic), it becomes visible for 1 round, then automatically becomes invisible again.

Osban (5 hp) is the leader of this group of pixies; in addition to the spells noted above, she knows *Otto's irresistible dance* (once per day). Osban is the spokesperson if there are any negotiations to be done with the adventurers.

Each pixie is armed with a small, slim sword (1d4 dmg) and 10 *sleep* arrows (1d3 dmg; save vs. spell or fall asleep for 1d6 hours).

The faerie folk's initial attack is to severely distract characters by casting several *dancing lights* glowing spheres that weave and bob around and among the party, and then to steal one or more items from the distracted character. Their first choice of things to grab are any objects which glitter brightly: gems, jewelry, silvered weapons, polished steel, even shiny buttons and buckles. Their second choice is any object which appears to be magical, such as a rune-carved staff, a weapon that glows, or a vial with an inscription on it in unusual script. Their third choice is anything that is loose or that can be loosened quickly: belt pouches, items worn on a thong around the neck, light-weight packs. If no such items are easily available, or if further distraction is needed, the pixies cut through the bottom of purses, packs, and saddlebags, or slice through the ropes which bind a pack animal's burden in place. They then help themselves to the items which fall free.

If PCs react violently to this behavior the thefts cease immediately and the pixies attack, remaining invisible at all times. Their objective in a fight is to shoot the PCs unconscious with their sleep arrows, strip them of gear and weapons, and move their sleeping bodies away from this part of the forest.

Pixies Attacked or Captured

If the pixies are attacked, or if any one of them is captured (perhaps by a lucky quick grab on the part of a PC), two things happen simultaneously.

A captured pixie immediately *polymorphs* into the form of a poisonous snake and becomes visible. In this new form, the pixie attacks the character and at the same time tries to escape the adventurer's grasp. If this attempt fails, the pixie uses *ESP* to read from his captor's mind what kind of creature would seem especially repulsive, then *polymorphs* into that form. If a character has established a phobia against a certain type of creature in the course of gaming, the pixie will turn into that creature; the adventurer should make a WIS check to avoid recoiling in horror and losing his grip. Once freed, a pixie turns invisible, returns to its own shape (unless its polymorphed form is faster), and retreats.

If PCs attack the pixies, all pixies who are free to do so immediately withdraw from the area surrounding the PCs. Reaching their sleep arrows, Osban creates an *illusion* of a hill giant, approaching the adventurers from their least guarded side. The illusion is fully visual and audial. The giant cries out in Auric, "Leave my friends alone!" and wades into the thick of the PCs to attack. While Osban controls this illusion, the others shoot into the melee with their arrows until all the PCs are asleep.

Hill Giant Illusion: AC 3; MV 12; HD 12, hp 70; #AT 1; Dmg 2d6; AL N; Size H (16'); THAC0 9.

This illusionary hill giant does not hurl rocks in this encounter. He wades into conflict swinging his massive club and fights to the "death."

These pixies are not friends with any hill giants, but favor this illusion because it seems to strike fear into most of their foes. Adventurers who know something of pixies and hill giants might realize the two kinds of folk are unlikely to cooperate or be friends. This is not typical hill giant terrain, nor are many hill giants likely to speak Auric. These discrepancies might be a further clue to the nature of the illusion.

REGROUPING

If any characters are still awake after the pixies have exhausted their sleep arrows, or if more than two pixies are slain in this encounter, the faerie folk retreat for the time being. However, another group of pixies identical to this one is encountered if PCs continue in this direction. The adventurers can proceed without meeting pixies only if all the faeries in one encounter are slain, or if the party negotiates some sort of agreement with the pixies. Pixies can be *charmed* into cooperation, or bribed or persuaded by a fast talker (check reaction rolls).

PCs Defeated

Pixies leave the PCs alone if one of two conditions occurs. First, if the faeries are successful in swiping odds and ends from the characters, they vanish into the meadowlands and PCs are left missing 1d3 items apiece. These things will not be recovered unless the adventurers are capable of *charming* the pixies into cooperation, or have some magical means of locating their belongings. The characters are free to continue their tracking without further hindrance from pixies.

The second condition is one in which a fight has taken place and the pixies are victorious. In this instance, PCs awake in a damp, boggy meadowland back the way they came. They have been stripped of all personal belongings (from belts, pouch, and pack), are missing any weapons which they actively used to fight the pixies, plus any items whose magical properties were displayed in the encounter. These characters encounter pixies again any time they continue following the dragon hunters' trail. They can avoid this problem by detouring around this area and attempting to pick up the trail further on. This delays them one day.

Any character who slew a pixie in the fight is missing. Such characters have been handed over to the hulderfolk and are now their prisoners. They will be encountered later in the adventure. If PCs want to search for missing companions, they may do so, but should right away run across Mossfoot and Whitewing. If all characters have slain pixies, skip the remaining encounters and continue play with Chapter 4.

MID-AFTERNOON:

MOSSFOOT AND WHITEWING

Later in the day the party comes across a place where the dragon hunters made a brief meal stop. Read the following out loud:

Beside the trail the ashes of a cookfire are scattered about. Among them lies an odd-looking carcass, its gnawed remnants sporting an unrecognizable assortment of odd bones. Not far distant the charred remains of a similar carcass lies on the side of the trail. Its shape bears an uncanny resemblance to a miniature dragon. In the shrubbery beyond lies yet another creature, shot through the breast with an arrow. Its resemblance to a dragon is unmistakable—just a foot or two long, the dead beast has the scaly hide, wings, and coloration of a red dragon. A stinger on the end of its supple tail is silent testament to its mode of attack.

Before you can investigate more closely, you hear a high-pitched hissing from the tree branches, a sound which turns to a growl. Although nothing is visible, the sound moves around you in a semi-circle through the branches, tree leaves rustling in its wake.



Whitewing (pseudodragon)

INT 10; AC 2; MV 6, FI 24 (B); HD 2; hp 7; #AT 1; DMG 1d3 + special; MR 35%; Size T (18" + 24" tail); AL N; THACO 19. SA tail stinger attacks are +4 to hit; if stung, target must save vs. Poison or be cataleptic for 1d6 days. SD chameleon ability: 60% invisible against typical forest background. Has *telepathy* with chosen human; infravision (60') and can see invisible objects.

Whitewing is impulsive, cocky, and curious. He is smarter than the average pseudodragon but no wiser than others of his kind. He reacts touchily and attacks anyone who threatens him. This behavior ceases after he has time (1 turn) to probe the adventurers telepathically: if they are not evil characters, Whitewing is open to friendly overtures, although he is despondent from grief.

Once Whitewing realizes that these people are on the trail of the ones who slew his family, he will be inclined to "adopt" one of the party as his companion and accompany the group on their mission. Selection of Whitewing's companion can be based on reaction rolls, or the DM's choice, as desired. If well-treated, Whitewing will remain a faithful friend even after the party's mission is completed.

In this place the dragon hunter Tekolo came across a nest of pseudodragons. The hunters killed the nestlings and their parent when the mother pseudodragon attacked their party. Only one of these creatures is left alive, one called Whitewing for the albino birthmark on his right wing. Whitewing fled the area to get help from Mossfoot the treant. Yet by time Mossfoot responded to this request, the dragon hunters had left the area. Knowing that humans and humanoids were to blame here, Mossfoot has animated some trees to help him keep unwelcome persons from harming the remaining pseudodragon.

When PCs first enter this area, Whitewing spots them and alerts the treant. The rustling of leaves is the sound of Mossfoot and his trees moving to surround the characters. Whitewing is 60% invisible (not 80%, since he is partly albino) against the trees due to his camouflage ability, although this is somewhat lessened due to the pseudodragon's movement and the PCs' nearness.

As soon as PCs hear tree leaves rustling, observant characters see the trees actually drawing closer around them. Three trees encircle as much of the party as possible by lowering and entwining their branches. Then a deep, slow voice from one of the trees demands, "Why do you trespass?"

If the pseudodragon discovers through telepathy that any of the PC party members are evil, the treant and his animated trees attack to slay those characters. If none are evil, Mossfoot does not attack, but refuses to let the party continue on their way through this area. A detour will delay the party by one day. If they attempt to continue anyway, treant and trees attack to injure, not kill. Whitewing joins in any such attack. However, if the pseudodragon decides to join the party, Mossfoot allows the entire group to pass unhindered.

NIGHTTIME:

MOONLIGHT REVEL

Play this encounter after the party makes camp the second night. No successful hunting or tracking check is needed to play it—the hulderfolk find them!

The terrain where PCs camp is the same pond-scattered forest they have been tracking through. Derry, increasingly

Mossfoot (treant)

INT 12; AC 0; MV 12; HD 7, hp 39; #AT 2, DMG 2d8/2d8; Size H; AL CG; THACO 13. SA animates trees (one round to uproot; must stay within 60 yds.); structural damage to buildings and fortifications. Fire attacks against treants are +4 to hit, +1 dmg; saves against fire are at -4.

Mossfoot is a young and hasty treant, taking only ten or twenty minutes to reach decisions instead of ten or twenty hours. His peers hope he will eventually grow out of this disgraceful mindset; in the meanwhile, he lives in the border fringes of hulderfolk territory far from the more sentient trees, among whom he is considered a bad influence. Nevertheless, Mossfoot has the best interests of the local woodlands and wildlife in mind. He is completely outraged at the slaughter of the pseudodragons, and has a protective, patriarchal attitude toward Whitewing. He is suspicious of strangers.

Trees (2): AC 0; MV 3 per turn; HD 12; hp 58, 72; #AT 2, Dmg 4d6/4d6; AL N; THACO 9. Has same vulnerability to fire as a treant.

fascinated by dragon riding, has begged a ride at the front of Tavin's saddle during a dusk sweep, and they have not yet returned. When it is completely dark, read this scene to whichever characters pull the first guard duty. If no guards are posted, read this to the entire party shortly after nightfall:

A faint light illuminates distant trees, then grows brighter. It is caused by eight round, glowing balls of light hovering in the air between tree trunks, sparkling in colors of green, blue, yellow, and pink. As they draw closer, their shapes change until they resemble torch flames, flickering in multicolored variety. These lights move steadily and rapidly toward your campsite. A hum becomes audible as they draw near, soon resolving into musical words and phrases that just evade the ear.

Rangers and woods-wise characters might well suspect that these are will-o-wisps, considering their behavior and the swamp-like ponds and bogs in this area. In fact, the real danger here is far more subtle. These are not sentient creatures, but a special enchantment cast by the hulderfolk, called *luring lights*. This dweomer has an effect as noted in the spell description below. Characters who have encountered hulderfolk prior to this adventure might recognize *luring lights* for what they are (DM's discretion). If circumstances in the course of the adventure warrant it, it is possible that hulderfolk might teach a magic-using elf this unique spell. At this point, however, the adventurers must contend with the unusual magic and its effects as best they can.

Luring Lights (Alteration)

Wizard Level 3

Range: 40 yards + 10 yards/level

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 4 rounds/level

Casting Time: 2 rounds

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: none

This spell creates one glowing ball of light per level of the spell caster. Each can be manipulated in shape and movement as is common with a *dancing lights* spell, which this



one resembles. However, the flickering lights radiate in the aural as well as visual ranges; persons within 50 feet can hear an indistinct melody from them, called the "song of the spheres" by the hulderfolk. This enchanted tune, along with the visual fascination of the lights, have a combined effect on the viewer that is much like that of a siren calling to sailors. Characters who are within 50 feet of one of these objects and who both see and hear the ***luring lights*** must save vs. spell, or fall under their enchantment.

An enchanted character is compelled to follow the lights as they retreat into the wilderness. The character does not realize he is under a compulsion and has no sense of danger from this driving curiosity. He fights off any who try to hinder him from following. A character so affected suffers from this compulsion until he has been out of sight of the lights for at least one full turn.

Luring lights are typically used to draw travelers to a scene of hulderfolk revelry, where the reclusive elves can then play tricks on their unwitting and unresisting guest(s). The material components of this spell are phosphorous or glowworm, and the seed of an avocado or pomegranate.

As noted in the spell description, characters who are within 50 feet of the *luring lights* and who can both see and hear them must save vs. spell or be compelled to follow. Attacks can be made against the lights but have no effect on the immaterial objects. Bar'lind, a hulderfolk wizard, is directing the actions of the lights from 100 yards away in the woods. If PCs manage to find Bar'lind, he ceases spellcasting and flees to join his companions in the meadow described below. Bar'lind's statistics are given with the rest of the significant hulderfolk below.

If the adventurers are accompanied by friendly ogres, the ogres are lured off into the woods by additional lights. They do not join the characters in the encounter these lights lead to.

The *lights* lead bespelled characters away from their camp and into the woods, guiding the adventurers on a 20-minute-long hike that takes them out of sight of their camp and into a moonlit forest meadow. If no characters are enchanted,

Bar'lind nevertheless moves the lights along this course in order to draw investigating PCs into the revelry. At the meadow, read the information given below.

FESTIVITIES

The multicolored lights lead to a meadowland, then dart away to join more balls of light, hovering on the edges and darting about the middle of the field. But there is much more here than shapes of colored light. The skirl of pipes floats on the air, and dancing figures whirl in intricate patterns about the moonlit meadow. Rich movement, odd forms, the flickering of colored lights combine to dazzle your eyes, and it is a few moments before you distinguish the scene clearly.

The revelers are an elven folk, more slender and shorter than the average elf-kind. They are scantily dressed, in brief garments woven of leaves and forest materials and billowing, airy silks. Twenty or more dancers fill the meadow—with the hectic movement through flickering lights it is hard to tell exactly how many. Musicians play pipes and tambours, skipping in and out of the dancers without missing a note. Some of the revelers have elvish bodies but the heads of birds or forest creatures, yet this oddity seems unremarked by their fellows.

As you watch, a trio of dancers twirl away from their circling companions and cavort toward you. Suddenly more of the elvish folk encircle your party, appearing silently from out of the woods around you. Bright-eyed faces smile greeting on every side as a raccoon-headed fellow dances to a halt before you. He bows with a flourish. "Welcome!" he declares with a muffled voice. "We celebrate the fullness of Solais and the beauty of this meadow. Won't you join us?"

The party is greeted by Hallik, the leader of this group of hulderfolk. He wears a life-like mask in the shape of a raccoon, which is the reason for his muffled voice. This is the same group of hulderfolk which has been dogging the party's





progress all along. Since their earlier efforts to discourage the adventurers have failed, Hallik has now decided on direct action. If the PCs eat or drink anything that is offered to them, dance in the hulderfolk circle, or don one of the beast-faced masks, the hulderfolk will be able to play tricks of time or shape-changing on the characters, as described below. This is exactly what the hulderfolk hope and plan to do, and any characters affected by the *luring lights* spell must successfully check against Wisdom to be able to decline offers to join the revelry. Other PCs may make their own decisions.

If PCs attack the hulderfolk, the elves fight back viciously. Otherwise their aggression is confined to efforts to trick the adventurers into doing one of the actions noted above (eat, drink, dance, or wear a mask). The effects of such behavior is described in "Eat, Drink, and be Merry."

The hulderfolk leader is here with the foremost fighters, tricksters, and spellcasters of the hulderfolk settlement, Summerhome. PCs (and dragon hunters) have come nowhere near that hidden village, but have traipsed in ignorance through the surrounding hulderfolk territory. Anishta's party has been harassed by these elves as well, but has slipped

Hallik (6th level elvish thief)

STR 14, INT 16, WIS 11, DEX 15, CON 10, CHA 12; AC 9; MV 12; HD R6, hp 20; Morale 14; AL N; THAC0 18.

Weapon Proficiencies: short bow, short sword, thrown dagger.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: disguise (11), tumbling (15), ventriloquism (14), dancing (15).

Languages: Ancient Elvish, Auric (16), Marak Kender (16), Hoor (16), Hitehkel Gnomish (16), Fianawar Dwarvish (16).

Thief Skills: PP 35%, OL 5%, FRT 45%, MS 70%, HS 65%, DN 50%, CW 80%, RL 0%.

Magical Items: *ring of shooting stars*, *flask of curses*.

Hallik wears no armor and dresses lightly in the woven-leaf garments of the hulderfolk. This elf stands 4' 9" tall, with gold highlights in his chestnut hair and amber eyes. At this dancing revel he bears two *throwing daggers* +1; in other encounters he is also armed with a *short sword* +2/+3 vs. *goblins*.

He is arrogant and bold, a smiling rogue who seems sincere even while plotting his next deception. His daring tricks have captured a large following among the hulderfolk. He prides himself on the poetic justice of the jokes he plays against intruding humans. Hallik is capricious and makes decisions on a whim.

Bar'lind (8th level elvish mage)

STR 12, INT 16, WIS 14, DEX 17, CON 12, CHA 13; AC 7; MV 12; HD WZ8, hp 21; Morale 11; AL N; THAC0 18.

Weapon Proficiencies: staff, dart.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: spellcraft +1 (15), brewing (16), Summerhome history (13), leatherworking (16), singing (13).

Languages: Ancient Elvish, Treant (16), Pixie (16), Sprite (16), Auric (16), Marak Kender (16).

Spells (4/3/3/2):

1st: *affect normal fires*, *audible glamer*, *jump*, *wall of fog*

2nd: *fools' gold*, *glitterdust*, *whispering wind*

3rd: *dispel magic*, *luring lights*, *monster summoning*

4th: *ice storm*, *plant growth*

Magical Items: *wand of flame extinguishing*, *potion of delusion* (*invisibility*).

Bar'lind is 4' 7" tall, with dark brown hair and green eyes. He is in late middle years. He wears no armor but his robe is

through the hulderfolk traps with unexpected cunning. Hallik and his companions are now doubly intent on taking their frustration out on the player characters' party. These hulders do their best to make the adventurers welcome and then give them such a reception that they will depart and never return.

EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY

Hallik and his kinfolk do their best to pull the adventurers into the festive atmosphere here. The roguish elf offers food and drink to the party as any host would to his guests. Caelirra goes from character to character inviting them to dance. Bar'lind explains the craftsmanship of the masks if anyone seems interested; otherwise, he offers some to wear from a pile on the ground, puts one on his own head, and joins the dancers.

How the PCs entertain themselves is up to them, but they can easily have too much fun if they eat, drink, dance or don a mask. The invitations to do so should seem casual and spontaneous, to allay suspicions. The hulderfolk will not appear disappointed if their invitations are turned down, lest

cut down from someone's discarded (or stolen) garment, a distinctive style acquired through trade from the distant Minotaur League.

Bar'lind has learned to be cautious of humans and other elves even when playing tricks on them. This wizard speaks evasively in conversation, never giving a direct answer to a questions. He prefers subtle deception to Hallik's outright pranks, but admires the rogue's innate craftiness. This elf is always prepared to escape or defend himself if a hulderfolk trick goes awry and its victims take offense.

Caelirra (3rd level elvish fighter and cleric (Multi-Class))

STR 12, INT 11, WIS 17, DEX 11, CON 7, CHA 10; AC 7; MV 12; HD WA3/P3, hp 28; Morale 15; AL N; THAC0 18.

Weapon Proficiencies: short bow, short sword, long sword, sling, spear.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: herbalism (9), animal lore (11), animal handling (16), dancing (11).

Languages: Ancient Elvish, Pixie (11), Thenolian (11).

Spells (4/3):

1st: *animal friendship*, *entangle x2*, *faerie fire*

2nd: *chant*, *heat metal*, *trip*

Magical Items: *potion of plant growth*, *necklace of prayer beads*.

Caelirra stands 4' 5" tall, with light brown hair and green eyes. Her tunic of spider silk and leaves almost conceals the ring mail vest she wears underneath. She is armed with a short bow, normal arrows, 3 +1 arrows, and a long sword.

Caelirra's delicate features mislead people about her determination and her fiery temper. Her spiritual nature is closest to that of a druid (and thus she worships Jijin), though Caelirra constantly finds herself torn between a desire to commune with nature and the urge to celebrate uproariously with her kinfolk. She is quick to anger and ready to defend self and friends with her bow or a spell.

Hulderfolk (20): AC 10; MV 12; HD 1, hp 3; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; AL N; THAC0 20.

Hulderfolk pick up sticks and stones to use in combat if needed. They are unskilled in the use of weapons, but assist in jokes and pranks directed against the characters.

adventurers become suspicious of their intentions. The results of these activities are described below. Characters are allowed to make one saving throw vs. spell to withstand the effects of each activity noted below.

Dispel magic is of no use in negating these hulderfolk tricks. If characters affected by the *sleep* spells are not taken away from the hulderfolk revel by the rest of the party, they will not be seen again until they are met at the beginning of Chapter 4.

Food

Plenty of food is offered to the PCs. It is simple woodland fare: pine nuts, cress, wild grapes and berries, strange sweets and other, more filling concoctions of hulderfolk cuisine.

Any PC who partakes of this feast by so much as a single bite must make a save vs. spell. If the save fails, he is suddenly overcome with ravenous hunger, and is compelled to eat all food in sight for the next hour. When the hour is up, the character is replete and is abruptly overcome with tremendous tiredness. Non-hulderfolk elves suffer from this same affect. Afterward the character falls into a deep sleep from which he cannot be aroused. The spell wears off naturally after one week of slumber, or can be terminated by knowledgeable hulderfolk.

When this character awakens, he is 20-80 (2d4 x 10) pounds heavier than before he ate. This weight gain is magical and permanent unless some way can be found to lose it (DM's discretion).

Drink

Elves carrying wooden pitchers of fermented juice make you welcome, offering to pour for you, or extending their own cups to share. Wine flows freely in this group of wild and tipsy elves.

A character who drinks and fails his save is smitten with a great thirst. The PC feels compelled to drain a wooden pitcher of wine, whereupon he becomes completely intoxicated.

Once intoxicated, the PC is compelled to drunkenly sing a song or two, and must make a WIS check with a -4 penalty. If the check fails, the character joins in one of the other activities (eat, dance, or wear a mask—PC's choice) and suffers the consequences noted therein. If the WIS check is successful, the PC merely falls asleep in the same magical stupor described above.

Dance

Hulderfolk link hands and dance about in a circle. Some in the center follow steps with intricate patterns; others skip about randomly. As some stop to catch their breath and have a drink, feasters leave their places under the trees and take their kinfolk's place.

Any PC who begins to dance, whether in place or with others in the moonlit meadow, must save vs. spell. If the save fails, the character is compelled to dance and cannot stop even when he becomes exhausted. He is forced to dance until he collapses of exhaustion (see below).

After dancing for one full turn, the character begins to age. Aging progresses at the rate of one year per minute danced after the first turn. For every five years of aging that pass, the character is allowed to make a Constitution check. If the check fails he drops of exhaustion and falls into the magical

stupor described above. Otherwise the character continues to dance until his age is Very Old for his race (DM's discretion), at which point he collapses and sleeps.

After the first round of aging the PC can make an Intelligence check. If successful, the PC notices that he is aging visibly with every minute he dances, although powerless to stop himself. The character is free to call for help but even if forcefully restrained will continue to dance until he is unconscious. If PCs knock a friend unconscious to stop the dancing, the compulsion has passed by the time the victim revives.

Masks

Fantastic masks of fur and feathers adorn the heads of many of the hulderfolk. The masks are life-like, crafted with great attention to detail. The variety is great: the visage of a hawk, raccoon, boar, and donkey whirl past in the dance, and others sport half-seen in the shadows. To wear a guise seems a popular thing at this revel. A badger-masked elf on the sidelines catches your eye and motions invitingly to the pile of masks near his feet.

Once a mask is donned, the PC must save vs Spell. If successful, he can later remove the mask without difficulty. For characters not so lucky, the mask melds itself to the wearer's head, actually becoming part of the character's face. This is not evident until the PC goes to remove the mask later. At that time, it becomes clear that the mask is a mask no longer, but is the character's real face.

PCs who assume the likeness of an animal in this way are permanently stuck with the transformation. This is no illusion, but a permanent *polymorph* effect, affecting only the head.

PCs gain the same attributes, if any, that are distinctive to the animal type they now resemble. For instance, raccoons gain good night vision but are -1 to hit during the day. Donkeys gain 10% to their chance to hear noise; a character with the face of a hawk suffers no range penalties for using missile weapons (because of his excellent vision), but can no longer eat certain types of food because of the limitations of his beak and tongue. These are sample limitations; the DM may use these or devise others, depending upon what creature a character resembles.

After the PC realizes the transformation has taken place, he falls asleep and awakens as a hulderfolk prisoner unless taken away by his friends.

TAKING LEAVE

If PCs do not immediately fall for the hulderfolk tricks, Hallik and his companions do their best to detain the party all night long in hopes that they will sooner or later give in. If at least one PC has fallen asleep in the course of this encounter, Hallik insists that the sleeper should stay with them. The hulderfolk claim that the sleeper will die if moved by his companions, or that any non-hulder who touches the sleeper will fall asleep too—using any excuse to keep the sleeping adventurers. Hulders do not resort to violence to force PCs to remain, but use threats, guile and charm to the utmost. If characters attack the elves, the hulderfolk put up minimal resistance but retreat if one of them is slain (only to plot revenge and ambush for later). Adventurers need not fight, however; they can simply walk away if they have the willpower to do so.

Two hours before dawn, the hulderfolk cease their revelry and efforts at persuasion and vanish into the woodlands. When they depart, they take with them, if possible, any characters who have fallen victim to their pranks. The treatment



these characters receive is detailed in Chapter 4. If all of the party is taken captive, skip "The Canyon of the Pillars" and move directly to Chapter 4.

If casting about for a way to follow the huldurs, the party realizes that the elves have left no trace of passage, but that the dragon hunters' exit from the meadow is clearly marked—evidently they left in some haste. If the party had previously been accompanied by Gorrim or any other ogres, those ogres meet up with them again on the dragon hunters' trail, with a few interesting tales of their own adventures the past hour or two among the faerie folk. Gabus, with Tavin and Derry astride, soon swoops down, slightly panicked at having lost all trace of the party while they were hidden from view during the hulder revel. However, they think they've spotted something interesting, just to the east (the canyon of the Pillars). When the party confirms that that is the direction the hunters took, they should all hurry in that direction. The following encounter requires no hunting or tracking rolls.

JUST BEFORE DAWN:

THE CANYON OF THE PILLARS

The trail of the dragon slayers continues eastward. It is difficult to trace as the ground cover becomes sparse and the soil grows rocky. Ponds shrink in size then vanish as the track leads upslope, entering a rocky defile which ascends toward forested ridges at higher elevations.

A short distance ahead, the mouth of this ravine opens into a series of weathered abutments and dry washes flanked by sheer-sided cliffs. The faint tracks of your quarry are soon lost from sight amid the stone debris and small boulders that clog this maze.

As the PCs enter this defile, they come into a series of canyon passageways that branch and branch again ahead of them. Tracking the hunters is barely possible, but a scratched rock here, a broken branch there, indicate that the party is still on the right path. At the far end of this pass, the separate and inter-connected passageways join together once more, funneling into a final ravine that exits from the canyon pass.

The ground here climbs steadily upward while the cliffs rise in elevation even more rapidly. The heights begin at 20 feet overhead at the entrance to the canyon mouth, ascending to a maximum of 120 feet near the far end of the canyon pass. The walls lean inward so that characters up above cannot see down past the lip of the overhang. None of the ravines are wider than 20 feet; most are less than 10 feet wide. Any conversation loud enough to carry from cliff top to ravine bottom echoes loudly throughout the maze of walls.

AMBUSH PRECAUTIONS

The narrow passageways and vantage point offered by the cliffs might suggest the threat of ambush to alert PCs. If they are concerned about this they can take any reasonable precautions they wish, but after walking through this area for about an hour, their fears should be quieted by the following observations:

Before the party enters the defile, Gabus and Tavin (who check back in with them about the time they reach the first of the canyons) offer to fly over this area and check the top of the ravines for potential ambushers. The copper dragon will not enter the narrow passageways where he would be forced to walk and could easily be trapped. After his first scouting overflight Gabus reports that up above there is only scraggly pine woods, rocky outcroppings and a treacherous lip of rotten stone along the top of the ravines. There is no evidence

that anyone has passed that way.

In addition, ranger characters or other wilderness-experienced PCs will notice that hiding places are not to be found in abundance, except behind boulders, and from there any ambushers would be seriously hindered in their own ability to maneuver or flee. Too, the cliff tops are so far overhead ambushers can not easily attack prey in the bottom of the ravines. During the party's advance, the dragon and his knight can be glimpsed in the pre-dawn light, flying in lazy circles far overhead, not alarmed by anything out of the ordinary.

If any PCs want to follow overhead along the cliff, they must check against Dexterity every turn to avoid slipping on rotten rock and being carried over the edge of the cliff into the ravine. Wherever a PC falls the drop will be 30-120' long (1d4 x 30). The cliff tops here are truly dangerous and PCs should be discouraged from such exploration by the hazard.

GUARDIANS OF STONE

After an uneventful sojourn, and regardless of which exact path they have traveled, just before dawn the party reaches a place where all passageways run together into the mouth of a single, larger defile. Read the following out loud.

The boulder-strewn canyon floor blends into weathered slabs of agate and jasper paving the ascent like steps of a giant's stair. The canyon narrows here, creating a natural funnel leading into another ravine passage. Cliff tops rise high overhead, then merge with the steep slope of a forested ridge. The narrow canyon ahead is a notch in this ridge, its far end offering an exit onto the hillside above.

No matter the caution or carelessness with which PCs enter this area, the ambush should not be evident until the adventurers are within encounter range. If characters are suspicious and take particular pains to avoid being ambushed, let them roll normally for initiative during the encounter rather than being surprised. If cautious PCs enter the Pillars ravine from any other direction than the one assumed above, alter the physical descriptions of the area as necessary.

The rough agate and jasper steps, 20 feet wide, lead upward. Where the ground levels out, the ravine widens, forming a 40-foot wide corridor between the cliff sides. The corridor is paved with flagstones of rough marble, barely visible beneath the debris of fallen rock which clutters it.

The paved corridor extends for over 100 feet between cliff walls. What was once natural rock has been carved and worked into pillars, balconies, and galleries, set with chipped mosaics of ancient design. At the far end of the passage steps of stone lead from the ravine to the forested slopes above.

The stonework of galleries and pillars is chipped and cracked from weather and disrepair. The place has the air of an abandoned ruin, but for the watchful poses of the statuary. Three pairs of broad stone pillars flank the passageway, a pair at either end and another set in the middle. Two squat winged things are atop the columns at the far end, while a pair of robed figures surmount the pillars at the midpoint. Atop the pair at the near end are chipped and broken statues in the likeness of a creature with the body of a man and the legs, head and wings of an eagle. The twin bird-men crouch in poses of alertness atop their pillars. Their eyes are blank orbs of weather-pitted stone, staring sightlessly down at the walkway between them.



This place was known as the Pillars of the Moons to spellcasting ancients of Taladas. Characters with Ancient History proficiency have a chance to recognize the pillar figures for what they are.

The first pair, the Goliskavarr, are elemental guardians of good associated in ancient times with the moon Solais. The second pair of figures represent the Purandarr, the faceless and unbiased elemental spirits of neutrality, scions of Lunais. The final pair at the far end of the ravine are the Ugonarr, the vampire owls which once symbolized visitations of evil from Angomais.

All statues are inactive at the moment and pose no threat to the PCs during this encounter.

THE PILLARS' ORIGIN

Although Taladan spellcasters have never been organized along the lines of the High Towers of Ansalon, wizards of ancient times established places of knowledge and power. The Pillars of the Moons was one such, intended to be a common meeting ground for the wizards of all three alignments. Guardians imbued with the spirits of the wizards' moons kept the peace and made certain that only qualified mages of skill and power were permitted entry to the hidden complex of the Pillars.

Much of this secret place, hidden in the cliffs, was destroyed during the Cataclysm. Its purpose and location was forgotten in the upheaval which followed that disaster, until knowledge of the Pillars of the Moons faded from the minds of men. Though saved from complete decay by the magic of its construction, the Pillars have been lost in the Conquered Lands for ages, forgotten by all but forest animals and inquisitive forest folk since time out of mind.

ANISHTA'S EXPLORATIONS

When the dragon hunters chanced across the defile sheltering the Pillars of the Moons, they were surprised and cautious of their unexpected discovery. Many of the hunters

come from distant places where ancient ruins are known to exist, and where they are regarded with fear and respect. Although Anishta's curiosity was sparked, her companions were notably reluctant to explore the ruins.

Yet the more Kohver, Pollip and others argued that the group should move speedily through this ravine, the more Anishta became inclined to stay. The priestess of Hith finally ended the debate with a curt order to set up an ambush for the hunters' unknown pursuers, the adventurers detected some time ago by the draconian rearward. With her forces thus confined to the defile, Anishta would have a chance to look through the ruins to a limited extent without hindering the group's progress.

In fact, Anishta has discovered little of practical usefulness in the ruined complex. Galleries carved into the rock face end in blank walls where a passageway would normally be expected. All efforts to detect secret doorways or other entrances have failed. A network of stairwells and winding ramps tie the ground-level galleries to colonnaded balconies 15 feet up the cliff face, but the balconies are merely interconnected vantage points with no apparent purpose.


Baffled by this construction, Anishta assumes the place is some sort of shrine to ancient, forgotten and now powerless deities. The true nature of the Pillars of the Moons has so far evaded her.

Nevertheless, the place offers ample concealment for an ambushing force, so their halt in this place is not wasted effort. However, the disposition of the dragon hunters' forces is not important at this point; it is described in Chapter 5, under "Dragon Hunter Initiative." As the hunters trigger their ambush, Tavin and Gabus spring into action.

DARING RESCUE

Tavin and Gabus have been seen circling overhead at intervals. They are keeping an eye on the ravine, and notice the opening of hostilities. The pair is frustrated in their desire to help, because the canyon at this point is treacherously narrow and hazardous to fly into. Torn between need for action





and concern for safety, Gabus and Tavin decide to make a dangerous swoop to aid their companions, assuming that the party will be less shaken by their passage than the enemy will be. As it happens, the dragon's pass will give the hulderfolk time to activate the beams and their other magic, so that few if any blows fall during this ambush.

The DM should time this event to take place just after PCs realize they are in the midst of an ambush and are beginning to react—running for shelter or still in confusion. This allows dramatic and potentially helpful intervention by the copper dragon, and removes Derry from this place of danger, as described below. Derry should be preserved for the sake of her future usefulness, and not risk death or the inevitable capture by hulderfolk at this point in the adventure. As PCs dash into action, let Derry linger, surprised, in the open, or dash the wrong way in unthinking confusion.

An awesome roaring cry and the boom of wings is heard overhead, then silence. Suddenly a massive copper form plummets toward the narrow canyon from above. Tavin hugs Gabus' neck as the pair plunge into the ravine. Just as it is certain that the dragon will shatter himself against the rocky overhang, he claps his wings back to his sides. Hurting downward, the dragon twists sideways and slips between ravine walls with mere feet to spare. Where it is wider at the canyon bottom, the speeding dragon twists upright again, tail rigid and wings stiff by his sides.

The speeding dragon levels off bare feet above the ground, his momentum carrying him the length of the canyon with a whistling rush of wind. But in this confining space neither dragon nor knight can fight the enemy, and your nearness makes it too dangerous to use a breath weapon. Gabus' yellow-fanged maw opens and a cry of rage crashes like thunder between cliff faces. All who stand in the canyon, friend and foe alike, are momentarily frozen by the awesome sight of a several-ton creature hurtling toward them.

Derry too freezes, caught in the open on the ravine floor. There is a startled cry from the teenager, a dexterous snatch with one taloned claw, and Gabus plucks the girl from his path, sweeping her along as he shoots out the canyon mouth and veers sharply skyward.

The wind of the dragon's passage leaves you breathless, especially as you realize that the air is tingling around you.

MOOGATES

The hulderfolk have not forgotten the PCs, nor do they appreciate the violent trespass of adventurers and dragon hunters into a place they have come to honor for its ancient magic. Hallik and his companions intervene in order to stop these resented intrusions once and for all.

Although the hulders do not know the true inner workings of the Pillars of the Moons, their centuries of familiarity with the ruins have taught them one thing, at least: how to activate the mysterious beams in this canyon. Hallik and his people do not realize that activating the beams gives admittance to the heart of the Pillars complex, or they would not chose this course of action. All they know is that people or animals who have wandered through the gates do not return.

With the beams activated, a certain number of the intruders are bound to get caught in the moonglow fields and vanish. The rest, the hulderfolk are resolved, they will take prisoner and dispose of in such a way that they will not cause disturbances in hulder territory in the future.

The hulderfolk sneak near the impending conflict under cover of invisibility and other cloaking magics. There is no

chance for their approach to be detected by anyone. Once in the ravine, the hulderfolk activate the beam magic of the Pillars of the Moons. This catches all those in galleries and on balconies (i.e., the dragon hunting ambushers)—they vanish, pulled into the ethereal interior of this ancient artifact. All friendly ogres, along with three of Anishta's, are turned to stone when moonbeams reflect into their eyes. The remaining two enemy ogres are back with Tekolo and don't get petrified—they get pulled into the Pillars with the other hunters. Immediately afterward, the elves put all others (the PCs) to sleep, and carry them back to Summerhome.

An odd glow fills the air, a sudden silvery illumination as of moonlight, but many times more intense. Its source at first is not clear, then becomes unmistakable: the radiance comes from the galleries, the balconies, the statues and pillars that fill this ravine. In the space of a few heartbeats, moonglow fills the air. Pockets of silvery mist form between certain colonnades and against cliff faces. The silvery glow flares and sparkles in places, its shine reduced to a sullen luster in others. The brilliance is a constantly changing pattern throughout the defile.

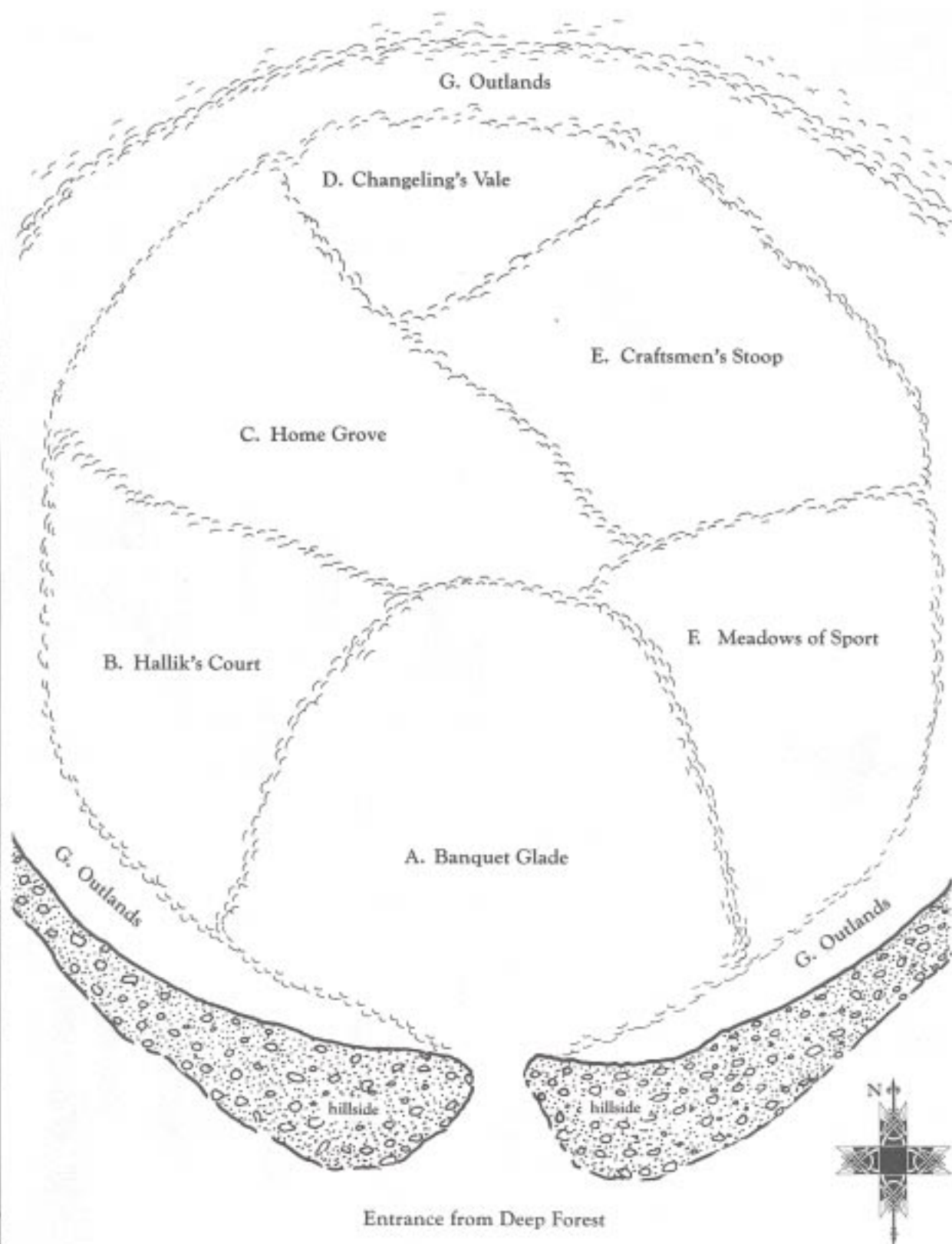
Then an unearthly phenomenon stirs the rubble at the base of the nearest pillar. Debris there sifts and reforms, returning to the statue atop the pillar, replacing a broken chip here, an abraded hollow there. In a magical moment, the statue is whole, as are the others that line the short canyon. The winged, eagle-headed figure at the canyon mouth stirs atop its perch, its blank eyes shining with radiant, silvery moonglow. The figure stretches its neck, turns its head, and transfixes a hunch-backed draconian with its blinding stare. Twin beams shoot from its eyes. The draconian becomes transparent, a ghost in moonlight, then vanishes from sight.

Characters witnessing this need not understand what they are seeing. It should seem mysterious and unexpected and somewhat threatening (the meaning of this sight is explained in Chapter 5). Similar beams quickly eliminate all other dragon hunters from the ravine. Moonbeams striking a target close to a PC should leave that character with his skin crawling and his eyes seeing spots until he falls asleep. Once the beams are activated, NPCs at their ambush stations are automatically caught in the moon-mist and vanish from sight.

Most of the ogres, as mentioned above, are in a class to themselves. A quirk of nature makes their blood react to the magical moonbeams. Those who look directly at the moonbeams turn to stone, some even as they are falling asleep.

Meanwhile, as beams flare to life, hulderfolk cast sleep dust over the combatants. This has the effect of a powerful sleep spell, to which even elves have no immunity. The characters' first clue to this is a faint glitter in the air, which they can easily mistake for an effect of the Moonbeams. In the next round, characters fall over, sound asleep. NPCs get caught in pools or flares of moonglow and soon vanish from sight; player characters simply fall asleep and are no longer aware of their surroundings. Any character who chances to remain awake through unusual protections is stricken blind and deaf with spells, then shrunk in size with a reverse *enlarge* spell (no saves allowed). He is picked up, restrained with a *cord of binding* as are his sleeping companions, and transported in this restricted condition until deposited in Summerhome with his companions. (*Sleep dust* and the *cord of binding* are described under "Hulderfolk Magical Items" in Chapter 4.)

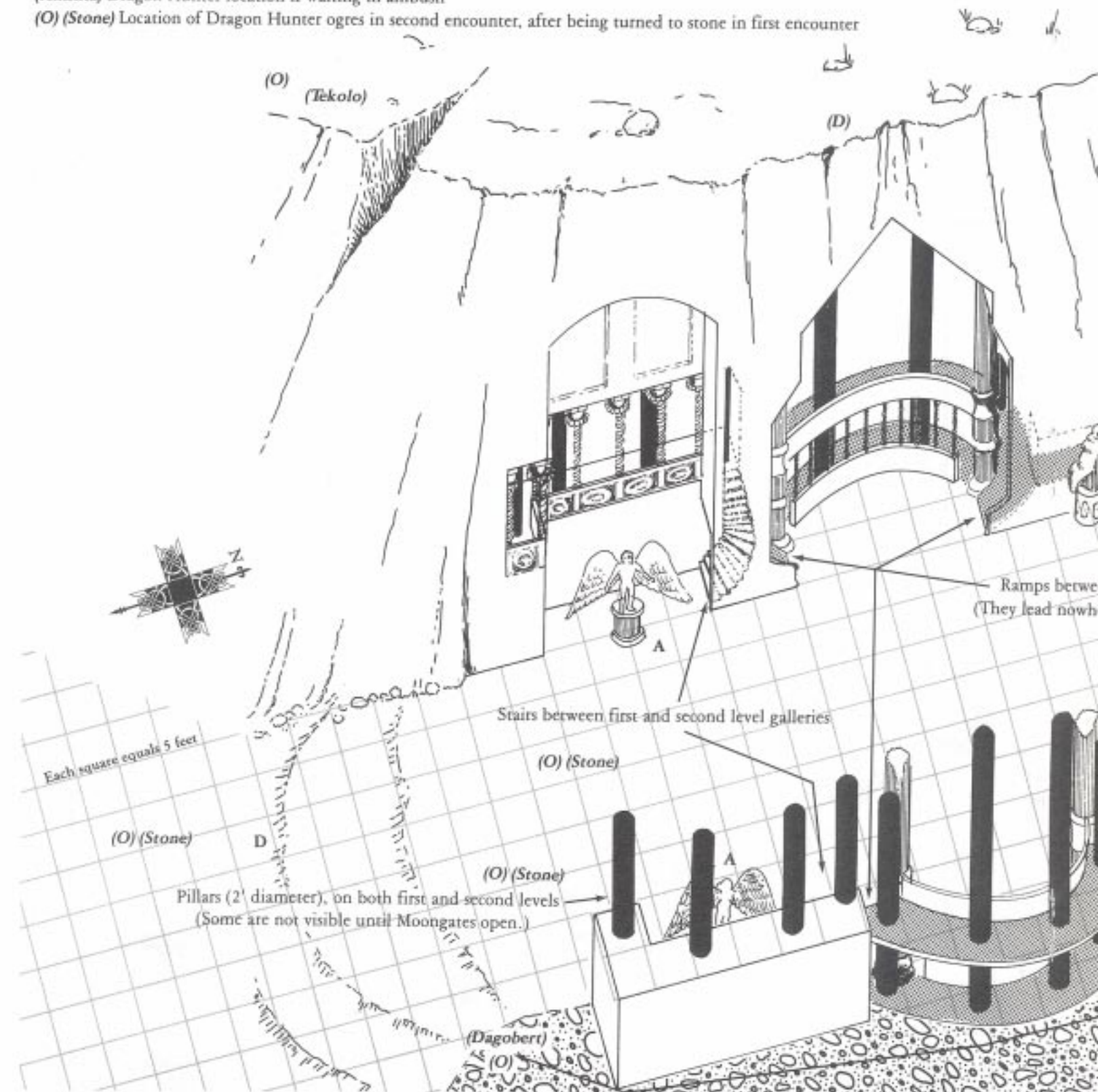
Summerhome

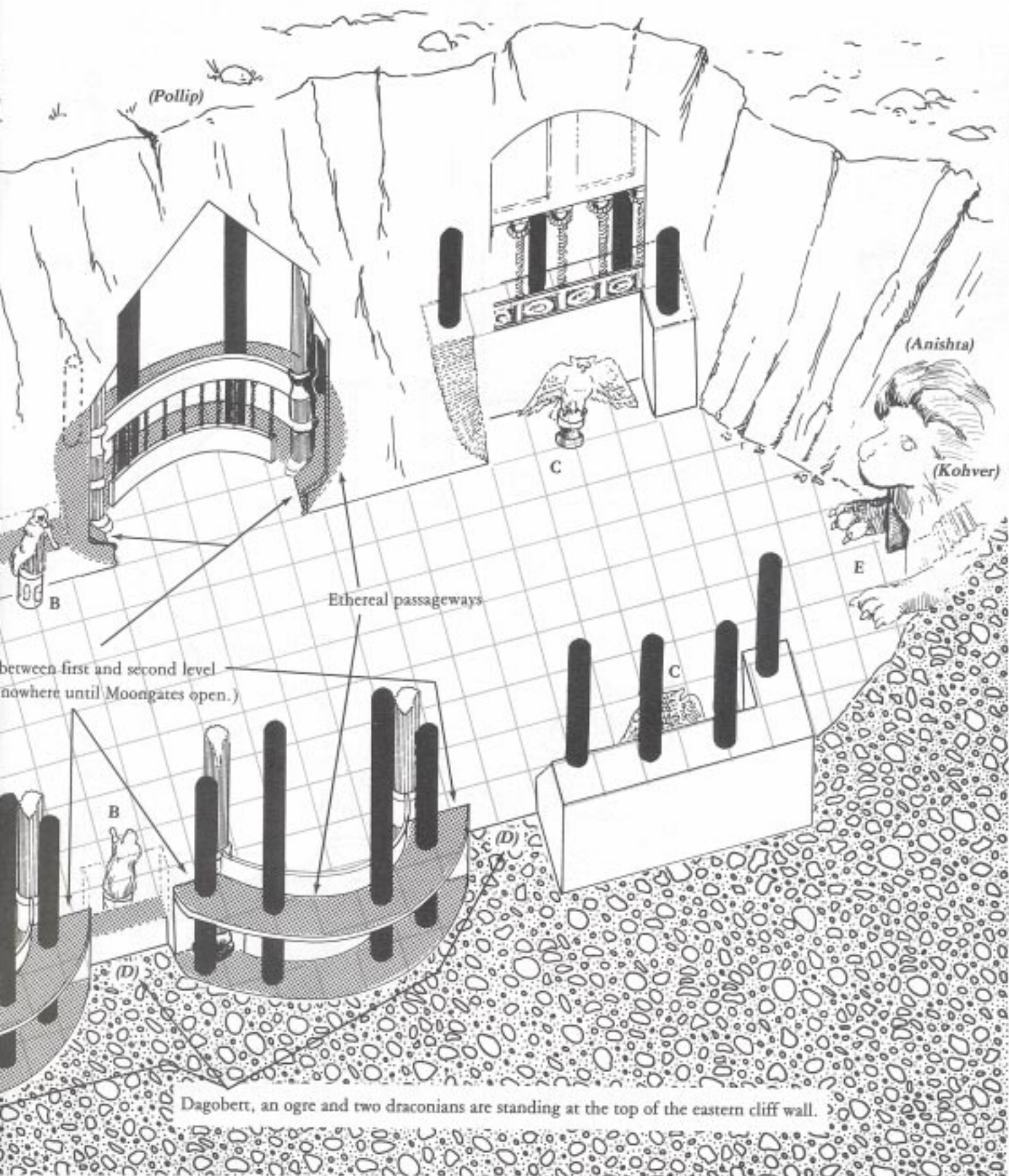


The Pillars of the Moon

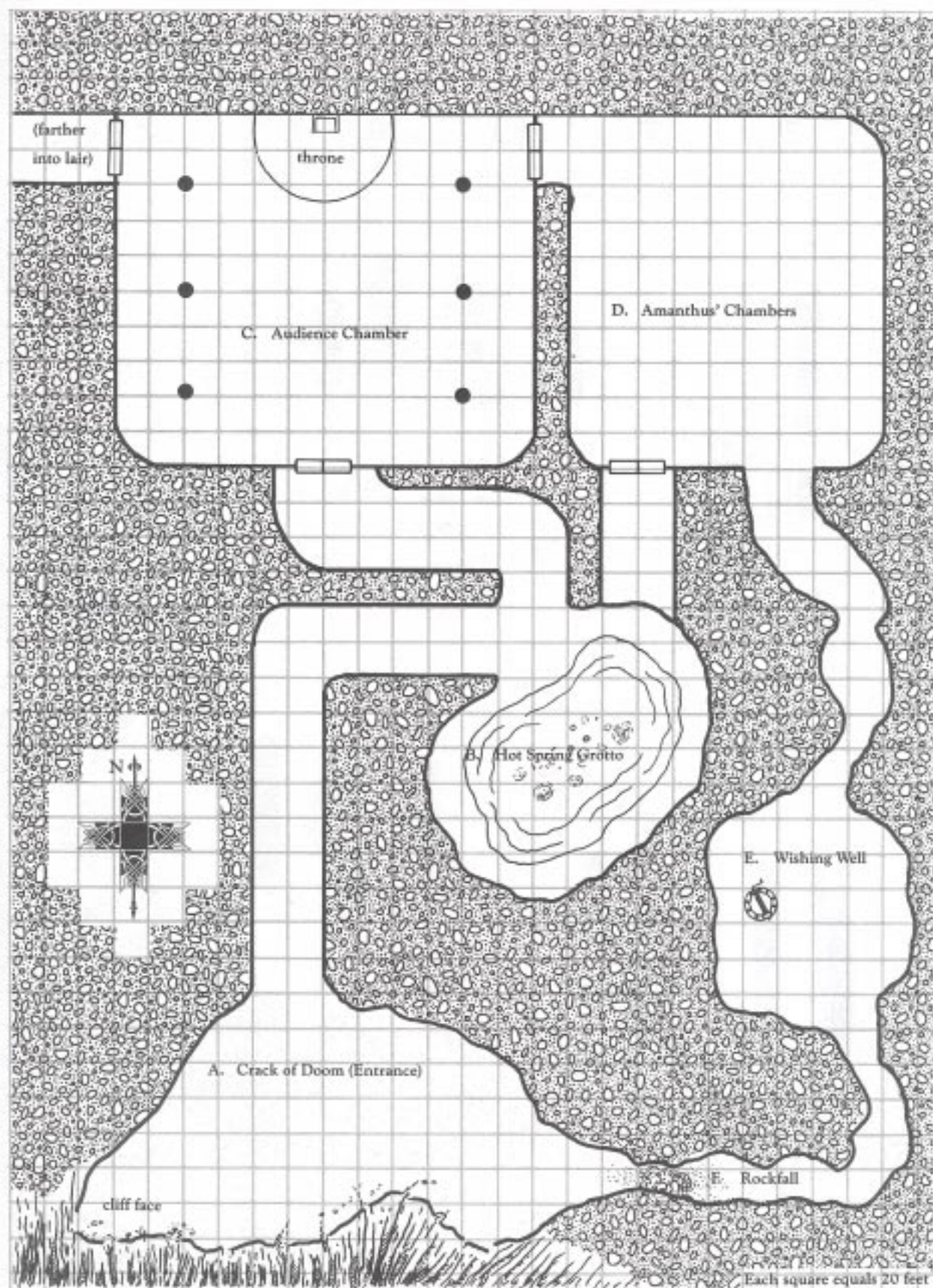
- (Anishta) Dragon Hunter location if waiting in ambush

(O) (Stone) Location of Dragon Hunter ogres in second encounter, after being turned to stone in first encounter





AMANTHUS' LAIR AT CLOUD MESA



CHAPTER 4: SUMMERHOME



DM's OVERVIEW

The party has been taken captive by the hulders; the dragon hunters have vanished (into the ethereal inner areas of the Pillars of the Moons, but the hulders don't know this). At Summerhome, the hulders' multi-planar realm, the party is under house arrest. They are somewhat free to wander about, but barely tolerated. As soon as the hulderfolk can decide what to do with them, they will be gotten rid of.

Meanwhile, the party can explore Summerhome, as long as they don't try to leave. During their explorations, they should make three discoveries: where their equipment is; how to escape; and that the hunters haven't been eliminated—they've been shut inside an artifact from which they can escape, and by the time they escape they will have learned a great deal of dangerous knowledge about its powers.

The key to escape from the Pillars of the Moons is a three moon conjunction, one of which will take place shortly. Once the party realizes this, they know they must quickly slip from hulder captivity and return to the Pillars.

WHAT IF NONE OF THE PCs REACHED THE PILLARS?

If the party is not yet aware of the Pillars, and thus don't know the hunters are trapped there, that information must be acquired as well.

Either Sheldin the leprechaun (at the Banquet Glade) or the ethereal dragon Kief, who resides in the Outlands, must be encountered, because they are the only ones who will tell

the party how to escape from Summerhome. They can also tell the PCs about the temporary capture of the hunters, and how the hunters will shortly be able to escape from the Pillars; that information is included in what Kief (and Sheldin) can give the party.

HULDERFOLK MAGICAL ITEMS

Several magical items are unique to hulderfolk, or are crafted with exceptional skill by them using magical techniques long forgotten by other peoples of Taladas. During their capture in the Pillars of the Moons ravine, or during their stay as hulder prisoners, the player characters will probably encounter one or more of these items. Their uses and natures are described below.

Cloak of Passage

The *cloak of passage* appears to be an ordinary garment of gray-green cloth, but woven with spider silk for a light, billowy weave. In fact, the cloak holds unusual enchantments. Its wearer can walk at will across the boundary of the Ethereal and Prime Material Planes, taking along anything he touches, as well as other living beings if they are in physical contact with the wearer. Short of hulderfolk magic opening the gateway to Summerhome, only someone wearing this cloak can leave the Banquet Glade and enter Taladas.

The cloak's command word is embroidered in Ancient Elvish on the inside collar of the garment. When that word is spoken, the cloak's wearer gains the ability to walk into one plant and out of another, as with the priestly spell, *pass plant*. When that word is spoken in reverse, the cloak permits the





wearer to dimension door, as the spell. The cloak bestows no special protections on its wearer, and every time one of its properties is used, it ages the wearer by one year. If it is removed while on the Ethereal Plane or within a plant, the wearer is trapped there until he finds some other way to get out of that space.

Cord of Binding

A *cord of binding* is made of spider silk, enchanted to obey a command word to tie a person fast. When tossed to the ground within three feet of its target, the line coils itself around the victim, securing limbs to the body with knots. This action counts as an attack, succeeding on a "to hit" roll of 5 or better. The target receives no benefits due to Armor Class, but Dexterity adjustments can make it more difficult for the cord to hit. No "to hit" roll is needed to restrain unconscious or unresisting targets.

The 10-foot-long cord is sufficient to restrain one large humanoid, two man-sized ones if bound together, or three smaller persons, such as kender. It uncoils and drops to the ground when its command word is spoken backward. Usually only the maker or owner of a *cord of binding* knows this magical command, which is not inscribed on the line in any fashion.

A cord can be cut only with difficulty. It withstands 10 hp of damage before being severed, and is allowed a save vs. Crushing Blow to see if any damage is inflicted at all by a given attack. It is impossible to snap the strands if less than 30 Strength points are applied; at 30 and up, a save is allowed as noted above. A broken or severed *cord of binding* loses its enchantment and becomes ordinary rope.

Jewel of Obsession

This cursed item is used as a trap to protect the hulderfolk's treasure hoard. The jewel is a large, green-glowing gemstone, obviously enchanted. Persons looking at the stone must save vs. spell or be smitten with an obsession to have sole possession of the gem. (Anyone who makes this save is free from further entrapment by the curse.) A person so afflicted will fight to the death anyone else who attempts to take the stone, or even to move it out of the obsessed one's sight. The accursed victim is not able to take himself away from the stone. He will stare at it longingly for hours, unwilling to sully its shine with the touch of his hands. He moves the stone from its resting place only with great reluctance, and then only if compelled. This unnatural concern can be terminated by casting a remove curse on the victim or a *dispel magic* on the stone. That is sufficient to break the curse for whoever is in the vicinity, but the stone regains its power after 5 rounds.

Sleep Dust

Sleep dust is created with the aid of pixie-cast *sleep* spells. Its physical components consist of exceptionally rare ingredients: the dusty coating of pixie wings and the breath of a hibernating bear, among others. These ingredients, hulderfolk magic, and the unusual *sleep* spells of the faerie-kind give the dust its surprising potency. A sparse handful causes a giant to slumber; a sprinkle puts a man-sized person to sleep, and a single pinch is sufficient to bespell kender and other diminutive humanoids. Even elves are not immune to its effects, which are differently achieved from those of an ordinary *sleep* spell.

When *sleep dust* touches a living target, that person (or animal) falls asleep immediately, into an enchanted slumber lasting 1d4 + 1 hours. There is no saving throw allowed to resist this effect. The dust is most efficient when sifted upon persons from above, or cast upon them from a short distance

(a foot or two) away. *Sleep dust* is light, and is easily blown away by a breeze. If it should be blown back upon the one who cast it, that person is as susceptible to its effects as any other. Once it settles to the ground or other surface, its magical dweomer discharges, and it has no more power to cause sleep. If an insufficient portion is cast upon its target (as, for example, when just a pinch lands upon a giant), the victim is allowed a saving throw vs. spells to resist the dust's effects. Failure means slumber for 1d3 hours.

SUMMERHOME

Hallik and his people are descendants of hulders who, centuries ago, were hunted and persecuted by non-forest folk. Those ancestors created Summerhome as a refuge from possible pursuit and persecution by others.

Summerhome is not marked on the mapsheet. Its precise location should remain uncertain to characters; for DM information, it lies no more than a few hours distant from the Pillars of the Moons, in an area of forested hills. All of Summerhome is an other-dimensional space created by ancient hulderfolk magic. Here the fabric of the Prime Material Plane of Taladas stretches thin, blending and overlapping with a parallel Material Plane inhabited by faerie-folk in an idyllic sylvan environment. The boundaries of each area within Summerhome, described below, are blurred where Planar matter shifts and blends. This has the effect of creating hazy or fog-filled border regions where objects seem to blur and run together. In fact, the very air here glows with an otherworldly radiance, a result of plane-spanning magic.

The geographical details of Summerhome shift as planar energies flux. Terrain traversed just moments before can suddenly become unfamiliar, although it will remain similar to its previous form. For instance, oak trees may seem to change position or shape, but they will remain oak trees in roughly the same number they had a moment before. Characters can easily become lost here, but will always run into hulders or settled areas if they move around long enough.

Time runs differently in this other-dimensional space. For the purposes of this adventure, no matter how many days or nights the PCs spend in Summerhome, it is eight weeks later in Taladas when they finally emerge, on the night of the next triple moon conjunction.

Because of the unique nature of this place, characters who become astral or ethereal in Summerhome perceive no change in their physical state or environment. It is possible to enter the Ethereal Plane through the outer boundary of Summerhome, but that particular passage is guarded in this adventure by Kief, the ethereal dragon, as noted below. If PCs want to escape Summerhome, they cannot do so by venturing through the planes, but must through guile or daring exit via the Banquet Glade, the way they came in.

HULDERFOLK ENCOUNTERS

PCs are not honored guests here, as will become immediately apparent. To the hulderfolk they are suspicious vagrants who have probably been responsible for woodland violence and even murder (of dragons). Reaction rolls are made with a base -5 modifier. If any hulders have been slain by these adventurers in earlier encounters, these suspicions are confirmed and reaction rolls suffer an additional penalty of -5. However, if PCs travel with Whitewing the pseudodragon, this leaves a favorable impression on the hulders and reaction rolls gain an additional modifier of +3.

PC protests of innocence fall upon deaf ears, or at least are heard with prejudice and preconceived notions. Throughout Summerhome, hulderfolk respond politely but coldly to PC efforts to draw them into conversation. A player character elf

will receive a slightly warmer response than others (+2 on reaction rolls as a racial adjustment; +1 for half-elves), but hulders are practically as reluctant to converse with an elvish adventurer as with any other. Their interaction with PCs will be minimal, with a distinct tone of condescension and mocking jest.

Hulderfolk do not fear anything the PCs may attempt to do while in Summerhome; they outnumber them if they must fight, but do not offer violence except in response to PC actions. If driven to fight, hulders have the statistics given under "Moonlight Revel" (Chapter 3), but here on their home turf, hulderfolk armed with short bows and short swords appear on the scene 1d3 rounds after the start of any physical violence.

Generally, though, Hallik and his kin rely on mischievously-used magic to quell any disturbance by the player characters. If PCs act boorishly (for example, by persisting in following and talking with a hulder who has turned away and is leaving), one elf or another might polymorph part of the PCs anatomy to resemble that of an animal. Adventurers who threaten violence are likely to be polymorphed into animals on the spot and left to their own devices. (Pigs, weasels, and badgers are popular forms for the hulderfolk to cast.) There is a 1 in 6 chance of a particular hulder knowing the appropriate polymorph magic to harass PCs in this way.

WANDERING ABOUT SUMMERHOME

As PCs move about the hulderfolk domain, they may enter any of the areas described below. A map of Summerhome is given on p. 31 of this adventure. Precise layout is unimportant, since the other-planar nature of this place makes distance and terrain an uncertain thing at best. Should travel time matter during game play, however, assume as a rough subjective guide that it takes about one hour to move from the center of one Summerhome region to the center of a neighboring one. Travel times can be adjusted as needed by the DM.

Significant encounters occur in certain areas of Summerhome. These ideally take place when PCs first move into Changelings' Vale (D), Hallik's Court (B), and the Outlands (G). If they are uninclined to enter these areas, however, the encounters can take place at any convenient point during their stay here.

A. BANQUET GLADE

When PCs enter the hulderfolk domain, the entrance vanishes behind them. Read the following out loud:

You are in a small woodland meadow flooded with brilliant sunlight. Grasses and wildflowers wave in a warm breeze, carrying their scent across the meadow. Round about lounge hulderfolk, refreshing themselves from banquet boards set among the trees and around the edges of the clearing. Those who do not feast stroll about, sipping wine, laughing with friends, or trading a joke with a pixie flitting by. Music comes from somewhere among the trees, and a distant trill of song drifts on the air. Only a few hulderfolk look in your direction, blandly noting your presence before returning to their pastimes.

If PCs wake up and suddenly find themselves here (as will probably happen), they discover they are stripped of all arms, armor, magical items, jewelry, etc. Even their boots and shoes are taken, leaving them literally with only the clothes on their backs. (They are made to surrender or

searched for concealed weapons as well.) If the adventurers came here under their own power with a hulderfolk escort, they are surrounded upon their entry to Summerhome and made to strip as indicated above. Characters who came here bemused by the compulsion to follow the hulderfolk are incapable of resistance at this point. Any who do resist are put to sleep with *sleep dust*, and reduced to clothes alone.



RUDE WELCOME

Once PCs have gotten their bearings in the field, Hallik and a cluster of hulders (including those from the "Moonlight Revel") come up to the adventurers. With a wave of his hand, Bar'lind releases any victims of a magical compulsion, and Hallik speaks to the party. If the characters have not met him before, Hallik introduces himself first, then says the following:

"So kind of you to join us," sneers the slender elf in a condescending tone. "First strangers come into this land, murdering our dragon friends, slaughtering innocent woodland life. Then intruding in our own woods! You are not even Landers with the excuse of an honest hunting expedition to lead you accidentally into hulder forests. Now you will abide with us a time until we judge that the hazard to our dragon friends is past, and that you yourselves are harmless."


"But you have not yet demonstrated that. Don't bother to protest your innocence. Time will tell well enough—as it did with the dragon slayers. With the song of the ancients it was easy to open the Moongates, to trap those who marauded through our woodlands earlier. As always, the Pillars of the Moons could tell the color of their souls. They are not likely to emerge from the canyon of the Pillars. At least we spared you that fate, so be grateful."

Hallik waves a hand, motioning about the meadow. "This is the Banquet Glade. Be at home. You may go where you will, do what you will, in this glade or beyond. If you overstep your bounds, you will know." A lazy smile crosses his lips. "Summerhome is your home, for awhile. The food, drink and entertainment are not quite so . . . addictive as they were before—they may be taken of safely. Enjoy yourselves."

The hulderfolk wander off, leaving the PCs to their own devices, unless held in conversation by one of the adventurers. In answer to PC questions, hulders are evasive and unhelpful. They are not offensive, but are just barely tolerating the characters here.

Hallik and the other hulders know that numbers of dragon hunters have been combing the Conquered Lands killing





dragons. They have heard from the faerie folk that this is also going on elsewhere, and they find the entire action abhorrent. Their restraint of unknown, probably violent, and possibly untrustworthy strangers is, the hulderfolk feel, a necessary step to help protect the dragons and keep their woodlands free of intruders. By the time they let these PCs go, enough time (years or decades) will have passed so that the immediate threat to dragons should be long since over.

Hints of this rationale should come through to PCs in conversation with hulderfolk, but it is never spelled out clearly lest PCs take offense or behave argumentatively. The hulders prefer to avoid such confrontations if at all possible, and do their best not to let PCs know exactly what the hulderfolk think of them.

Encounters

The Banquet Glade shelters hulderfolk dining, relaxing, singing, and chatting with friends. This is a communal gathering place where dances and revels are sometimes held, but more often small groups of hulderfolk amuse themselves with each others' company. Musicians sit among the trees, playing harps, pipes and tambours.

Hulderfolk musicians will be intrigued enough to chat with musically-inclined PCs, and this is one of the few ways adventurers have a chance of winning over some of the hulders. If PCs can entertain by skillful song, music-making, bardic tale-telling, or unusual dance form, they will collect an audience and gain +5 on future reaction rolls from hulders. PCs should not be given hints in this direction, however, but should discover this for themselves if they are so inclined.

Pixies mingle here as well. They have the same abilities detailed under "Grab It and Run" (Chapter 3) and respond in that manner if forced to defend themselves from PCs. Otherwise, pixies are a bit more inclined than hulders to talk with the adventurers, but are flighty and do not like to linger long. Their reaction rolls to PCs carry a base -3 modifier, rather than the -5 base modifier of hulderfolk.

Pixies will not offend their hulderfolk friends by overtly assisting the PCs. They will truthfully answer questions about the nature of Summerhome, but do not volunteer information. If a pixie has a favorable reaction to a particular PC, he will suggest the adventurers wander into the Outlands (G on map), or visit the changelings, thus nudging the party toward the clues that will help them escape this place.

B. HALLIK'S COURT

When PCs enter this area, read the following out loud:

Hallik holds court under a silver-leaved canopy of birch and elm. Large, gnarled tree-roots form a natural chair where the elf relaxes, nestled amid cushions and draperies of gold-dyed spider silk. Leprechauns tumble and jest at the foot of this impromptu living throne.

At the back of this shady bower a waterfall cascades a short distance over mossy rocks to fill a rainbow colored pond. The chatter of falling water echoes among the trees with a sound like laughing voices. The tunes of hulderfolk musicians blend in counterpoint with the water and the murmur of conversation.

PCs are personally ignored but their presence is tolerated. As they look on, read the following out loud:

In the sun-dappled clearing, a leprechaun leaps to his feet some yards in front of Hallik. As the faerie dances around in a jig, he proclaims in a high, piping voice:

Hallik the Great and Bar'lind the Bold
Have caught dragon slayers without being told
That Moongates awaited, old magic to hear;
Once opened, they trap men for many a year.
For ancients were wise and the ancients built well—
Not just any song can effectively spell
The opening gate in the full of the moon.
The Pillars, they shine, and the evil ones swoon.
Now banished they are like in stories of old,
By Hallik the Great and Bar'lind the Bold.

As the leprechaun bows to applause, musicians strike up a strange and stately melody, with an underlying off-key tonality. A female elf in diaphanous sky-blue spider-silks stands, and declares stanzas in a serious, monotone voice. Only at the chorus does her presentation change. Then, with an unusual lilting melody, she sings:

Goliskavarr, stand! Stretch your wings, guard us well!
Purandarr, look! Guide our fate, truth must tell!
Urgonarr, 'ware! Death sweeps by, doom so fell!

A reverent silence falls over the hulderfolk when the singer is done. When conversation resumes it seems more subdued than before.

The leprechaun's recital was a spontaneous boast about the hulderfolk accomplishment of trapping the dragon slayers in the Pillars of the Moons complex. He goes on at length about this impressive feat if he is singled out and questioned by the PCs. This leprechaun, called Sheldin, can give the characters the same information which is known by Kief, the ethereal dragon; he will speak to any character who speaks to him, regardless of alignment.

Leprechauns (5): AC 8; MV 15; HD 1/2, hp 5 (Sheldin), 4, 4, 3, 2; Attack only by stealing; AL N; Morale 11; Size T (2'); MR 80%; THAC0 20. They can become invisible at will, polymorph nonliving objects, create illusions (sight, sound and smell), and use *ventriloquism* spells as often as they like. If for any reason PCs are not stripped of valuables when they encounter these leprechauns, there is a 30% chance that Sheldin or his friends will snatch valuables from one or more PCs, turn invisible and dash away. If PCs do not carry distracting valuables, the leprechauns welcome conversation with them. They are under the protection of the hulderfolk in Hallik's Court.

Sheldin can also elaborate on the meaning of the singer's song. The singer is a hulderfolk bard. The song she performed is a relic of ancient times. The haunting chorus is the song which activates the Moongates in the Pillars of the Moons canyon. Bard PCs recognize the song as being of ancient origin and magical significance. Characters proficient in Ancient History can roll to recognize the same thing, but at a -4 penalty. However, if PCs fail to realize this is the song needed to open the Moongates, Sheldin helpfully volunteers this information to them. The bard who sang might be persuaded to reveal the same, but like the other hulders she is cold toward any conversational overtures by the PCs.

HULDERFOLK TREASURE

The waterfall behind Hallik's "throne" masks an important location. Special hulderfolk treasures are kept in a grotto concealed behind the rushing curtain of water. To casual observers there is no hint of a hiding place there, nor of the two water weirds which guard it; they do not form unless someone unauthorized approaches.



If PCs attempt to enter the water while hulderfolk are in this area (during daylight), the hulders prevent them from doing so. At any one time there are at least 3d6 elves here. There is an 80% chance that Hallik will be found here. If he is, he is accompanied by either Bar'lind or Caelirra (described at "Moonlight Revel," Chapter 3).

At night the water weards are thought to be sufficient protection against unauthorized entry. These water elementals attack anyone without the password who approaches within 10 feet of the waterfall or tries to penetrate the curtain formed by the rushing water.

Water Weird (2): AC 4; MV 12; HD 3+3, hp 25, 21; #AT Special; AL CON; Size L (12'); Morale 13; INT 12; THAC0 15 (striking as HD 6). SA assumes serpentine form in 2 rounds; any victim it successfully "hits" must save vs. Paralyzation or be pulled into the water and risk drowning; additional saving throw required for each round victim is underwater—failure equals death by drowning. SD sharp weapons inflict only 1 pt. of damage. A water weird taking full damage is disrupted, but reforms again after two rounds. Cold-based attacks act as a *slow* spell; fire-based attacks do half damage only if the weird fails its save; a weird can be slain with a *purify water* spell (one per spell).

These water weards are kept here by the magic of Summerhome. These elemental creatures are less vicious than those found on the Prime Material Plane of Taladas. This is reflected in their alignment, but their behavior against trespassers is as ferocious as might be expected.

If PCs can find a way to communicate with them and strike a bargain, it is possible to enlist their assistance. If PCs can find a way to free the weards of the enchantment which binds them here, the water creatures will gift PCs with a miscellaneous assortment of treasure items gleaned from the hulderfolk's stream over the centuries. This amounts to 1,000 stl worth of items, mostly non-magical jewelry, decorative daggers, and suchlike. There is a 10% chance for the treasure to include whatever type of potion the DM decides might be useful to the party.

The Grotto

Behind the waterfall is a spray-dampened, five-foot-wide and five-foot high alcove. It appears to be naked rock, empty of any contents. However, the back of the alcove is an illusion; it looks like stone and must be recognized as an illusion in order to be penetrated. That is, as long as the viewer believes the back wall is stone, his hand will not pass through the illusion, and he will in fact perceive stone to be there.

Beyond the illusion is a water-eroded rock cleft that leads farther underground. This narrow passageway is barely eighteen inches wide and four feet high. Slender and short hulderfolk squeeze cautiously through this gap sideways. Characters of large physical dimensions cannot fit through this passage at all.

The passage follows a descending, twisting course for 20 feet, then opens into another water-eroded cavern. Read the following to any characters who make it this far:

This chamber is a mere 15 feet in diameter. Chests and baskets containing goods confiscated from hulderfolk "guests" are stacked against the far wall. Atop this heap lie items you recognize as the personal belongings of your companions. But the most eye-catching thing here is a green-glowing gemstone, visible in a small gem casket lying open on the ground in the middle of the chamber.

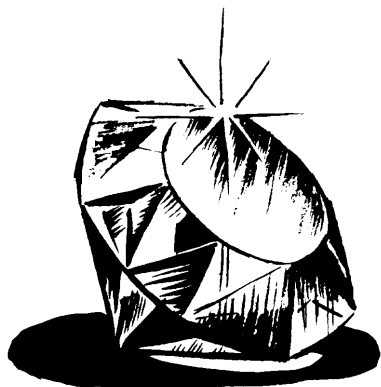
Safeguards

There are two safeguards against theft in this treasure cavern, and the PCs have just laid eyes on one of them. The glowing gemstone is a *jewel of obsession*, described at the beginning of the chapter. If PCs have approached in the dark, the stone's glow illuminates the passageway for its last 10 feet. Once the stone is glimpsed, any viewer must save vs. spell or be obsessed, as detailed in the gem's description.

Characters thus obsessed are likely to fight right there in the cavern over possession of the jewel, and will not be inclined to leave and take the gem away anywhere. This is, of



course, perfect protection for the treasure horde from the hulderfolk point of view. An obsessed character may attempt a daily saving throw to recover his wits long enough to tend to basic eating and drinking necessities. Otherwise, he stays with the gem until he passes out from lack of food or water. Hallik or other hulders come here only once every 1d20 days to check on things, so it is unlikely that an unconscious PC will be rescued by the hulders before perishing.



The second safeguard for this treasure is less obvious. A Bilo gnome was once unwilling "guest" to these hulderfolk, but she talked her way out of Summerhome by installing a "burglar alarm" of gnomish invention in this cavern. With time and dampness it has weathered into disrepair. The alarm no longer works as was planned, but might have a noticeable effect if disturbed by unwitting PCs.

The alarm is triggered when a particular chest on the bottom of the treasure heap is moved. This happens if characters declare they are searching through everything for treasure, or if they move the seventh box while looking for the *cloak of passage*. (See notes below about the cloak.)

As it was originally designed, the alarm consisted of cymbals on mechanical arms, concealed in a hollowed-out portion of the ceiling overhead. When triggered, it clapped the cymbals together repeatedly, deafening and disorienting thieves in the grotto and announcing the presence of intruders in the grotto.

Nowadays this mechanism is decayed from the damp. If triggered, two large bronze metal cymbals fall from the ceiling, followed by a rain of rotten wood, bits of rope, and rusted springs and retaining bolts. Roll a 12 or better on 1d20 to see if PCs within 5 feet of the entrance passage are hit by the falling debris. If a cymbal hits a character, it inflicts 1d8 +2 points of damage; other material does only 1d4. If cymbals miss the characters, they crash to the floor setting up a brief but noisy echoing clang. If this happens during daylight hours, hulderfolk from Hallik's Court will hear and come to investigate, though the water weards no longer care.

Cloak of Passage

Curious PCs, or those who came here specifically looking for the cloak, will come across the hulders' *cloak of passage* if they look long enough among this treasure. Roll 1d8 to see how many boxes PCs must look inside before finding the cloak. If they must examine 7 or 8 boxes, moving the seventh triggers the burglar alarm as explained above. Other than that effect, the box itself is not trapped or locked, and the dweomer of the cloak has saved it from damage in the cavern's dampness.

Other Treasures

Other goods here are mostly damaged by time and dampness. Weapons and armor are rusted, and cloth is rotted. Only the PCs' own items, having only recently arrived, are untouched by these storage conditions. The DM can place small, helpful magical items in this hoard if he desires, but most of the things have come here from Conquered Lands settlers, and have no special value. There is some treasure here in gold pieces and steel coin, up to 3,000 stl worth.

C. HOME GROVE

Hulderfolk are at home throughout the woodland, equally comfortable on the forest floor or high in the tree tops. Out of preference, however, their dwellings are located in the Home Grove, high amid the branches of massive, sturdy oak trees called sire-oaks.

Life in these tree branches has a distinctive hulderfolk flavor. Walkways are broad branches without safety railings or guide ropes; the paths are narrow, and the drop to either side long and deadly. Hulderfolk homes are platforms woven of smaller branches and covered with matting, under snug woven lean-tos tucked within the sheltering overhang of large limbs. *Faerie fire* and *dancing lights* spells light the tree-tops at night. Preferring vegetarian fare, cook fires are used far less than in human communities. Fires, when needed, are confined to the forest floor or, more rarely, small fires are kept in sandboxes with waterpots nearby for ready dowsing.

Ordinary characters are not invited into the tree homes of the hulderfolk. Most would find the climb and subsequent movement through the branches difficult and treacherous. Rogues with acrobatic or tumbling skills might find themselves up to it, but they, too, are unlikely to be invited. Characters who venture upward without a hulderfolk escort are quickly turned back, with force if necessary.

Adventurers who wander into the Home Grove are confined to the ground. At twilight, *faerie fire* lights the branches overhead, illuminating the sleeping platforms and shelters where hulderfolk gather; the ground is thickly shadowed during the day, and left in darkness at night. No hulderfolk are encountered on the PCs' lowly level, although some hulder children pop down to taunt the characters, shouting "Go join the changelings, where you belong!" A shower of twigs and acorns follow, herding the PCs in the general direction of Changeling's Vale (D on map).

Refuse from above litters some parts of the ground of the Home Grove. Giant skunks can be encountered here as they browse for a meal among cookfire leftovers and other garbage. Although they appear to be ordinary animals, these creatures come from the alternative Material Plane which is part of Summerhome, and are capable of talking to the adventurers in simple words and short sentences.

Giant Skunks (3): AC 7; MV 9; HD 5, hp 34, 29, 22; #AT 1, Dmg 1d6; AL N; INT 5; THAC0 15. SA can squirt musk cloud 60' long x 20' x 20'; target hit must save vs. Poison (at -4) or be blinded for 1d8 hours; causes nausea 2d8 rounds and reduces strength and dexterity by 50% for that time; victim must save each round he stays in the cloud.

If PCs pass near a skunk, they discover the animal can talk when it calls out to them, "Don't step on my food,"—referring to half-eaten parsnips and similar garbage underfoot.

Scavenging skunks are interested in feeding themselves, and do not have the patience or intelligence for a long, involved conversation with the PCs. However, they are also oblivious to hulderfolk attitudes about the PCs and will freely

converse for 1d6 rounds. The DM should play skunk conversation to lead PCs toward clues or give them helpful hints. Depending on what they have accomplished thus far during their stay, skunks might say things like:

"Go sleep with changelings. You like them."

"Hulders not open the way out. You not one of them."

"Don't make Kief angry if you visit Outlands."

If a PC keeps a skunk talking longer than its predetermined time limit (1d6 rounds) it loses interest and continues foraging. If bothered again by the PC it responds irritably and raises its tail, threatening an attack. After that point the skunk will indeed attack if disturbed again.

D. CHANGELING'S VALE

When PCs move beyond the Home Grove in this direction (see map), read this out loud:

Massive oak trees give way to groves of ash and birch. Here and there among the trees elaborately woven lean-tos stand, akin to the hulder shelters of the upper branches, but built solidly on the ground. Cookfire smoke wafts near from a cluster of five shelters in a birch grove.

Shadowy figures are glimpsed slipping between tree trunks. They are dressed like hulderfolk in bark cloth and woven spidersilk, but their build and features proclaim their human ancestry.

One figure drops from an ash limb to the forest floor before you, a red-haired youth who lands lightly on his feet. His piercing whistle a moment later draws others from the shelters. "Who are you?" he demands curiously. In a moment six changelings await your response to his question.

Hulderfolk sometimes exchange sickly elfin babies for the healthy ones of cottagers in the woods of the Conquered Lands. They raise these changeling children with love and affection, but relations usually become strained as the changelings grow out of their loveable childhood and reach their teen years. As they begin to mature, changelings become more and more like the humans they are descended from: stockier and taller of build than the slender hulderfolk, hairier, more violent than elves, and coarser of movement and sensitivity. Or so it seems to the elves, and the contrast is not one of which they are fond.

Changelings are given freedom to leave the hulderfolk if they wish, but they seldom do—all of their affection and all the world they know is that of the hulderfolk community which nurtured them as children. Shunned as something less than half-breeds, many changelings chose to move to the Vale, where they dwell in a community that is neither human nor hulderfolk in design.

The changelings of Summerhome live a life apart from the hulders who predominate. They never blatantly oppose the wishes of the hulderfolk majority, but they have a reputation for being contrary, disagreeable creatures whose natures are like those of their human kinfolk. When interacting with player characters, the changelings' conversation follows these rules:

—They never say anything openly against the hulderfolk.

—They will not participate in any violence against the hulderfolk.

—They will not harm Summerhome or weaken the defenses of this refuge.

—They regard newcomers with curiosity and less suspicion than the hulders, but are reserved, neither trusting nor open in their behavior.

During preliminary dialog with the player characters, the changelings want to get a feel for what kind of people the ad-

venturers are. PCs are barraged with questions like, "Why is Hallik angry with you?," "Why did you trespass in our woods?," "Do you come from far away?," and "Have you killed dragons, like they say?"

The spokesperson for the changelings and the one who talks most with the adventurers is Orelan, the red-haired youth who confronted them on the Vale path. Other changelings have the average statistics given below. There is no significant difference in abilities for changelings of different sexes. Although six interact immediately with the PCs, three times that number are observing half-seen or concealed in the surrounding woods.

Orelan (Changeling) (2nd level human fighter)

STR 15, INT 13, WIS 11, DEX 17, CON 13, CHA 14; AC 7; MV 12; HD WA2, hp 11; AL CG; Morale 14; THAC0 19.

Languages: Ancient Elvish, Auric (13).

Weapon Proficiencies: short bow (specialized), sling, spear.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: hunting (10), tree-climbing (17), singing (14).

Orelan has his short bow slung over his back when PCs meet him, but carries no other weapons. He is unarmored, wearing only bark leggings and a necklace of polished agates.

Changelings (24): AC 8 (DEX 16); MV 12; HD 1, hp 6; AL CG; Morale 12; THAC0 20. Six changelings are first-level fighters, carrying short bows (50% chance) or short swords, but wearing no armor. Two are first-level spellcasters; one with *dancing lights* at his command, the other with *shocking grasp*. The rest are unskilled fighters, but adept in woods-skills and handicrafts.

Orelan is shrewd and very much a survivor. Besides their curiosity value, he is interested in learning anything he can from the PCs which might help him and his fellow changelings better their lot among the hulderfolk. Although he does not spellcast himself, some of the changelings do, and Orelan will be especially interested in any magic the PCs can teach in exchange for a hulderfolk spell or two. If PCs are inclined to pursue this, Orelan encourages them to share their knowledge with Calna, the Tell-Woman introduced below. She can teach *luring lights* (described on pp. 24-25) in exchange for some comparable spell of interest (DM's discretion).

Orelan and his companions seem content to keep the PCs standing here on the trail until their curiosity is satisfied. However, when there is a lull in conversation, a woman steps out of a shelter in the birch grove and calls down the path, "Tell them 'tis Tell-time; telling needs done!" She steps back inside before PCs get much of a glimpse of her; those who are especially observant (DM's discretion) will note she is dressed in white deerskin (unlike hulder clothes worn by the other changelings) and appears to be blind.

Changelings heed the call, surrounding the party and leading them into the shelter. If there are signs of resistance, other changelings appear ominously out of the surrounding woods until a direct path to the woman's shelter is lined with grim-looking young men and women. PCs can break and run if they wish; these people will not stop them with violence. In spite of the foreboding silence, they are in no immediate danger whether or not they go along with the changelings.

THE TELLING

Calna (5th level human mage)

STR 9, INT 16, WIS 14, DEX 15, CON 8, CHA 10; AC 9; MV 12; HD WZ4, hp 10; AL NG; Morale 11; THAC0 19.





Weapon Proficiencies: sling (-4 to hit for blindness).

Nonweapon Proficiencies: ancient history (15), spellcraft (14), cooking (16), herbalism (14).

Languages: Ancient Elvish, Auric (16).

Spells (4/2/1):

1st: *enlarge*, *magic missile*, *mending*, *spider climb*

2nd: *pyrotechnics*, *web*

3rd: *luring lights*

Calna wears no armor and carries no weapons. She has a *potion of invisibility* she is saving for a special occasion, but possesses has no other magical items. Since going blind from an illness a few years ago, Calna has discovered an uncanny ability to tell fortunes and predict the future for those around her. She serves as wise-woman to this small community of changelings, doctoring their hurts and counseling their spirits. She is not their official leader, but is greatly influential in everything the changelings do as a group.

Read this out loud when PCs are taken into Calna's shelter:

"Be respectful," the red-haired youth whispers as he leads you to the woman's shelter. "This is Calna, the Tell-Woman."

Entering her shelter through a leather doorflap, darkness and incensed smoke assaults your eyes. Illuminated only by the feeble flames of a small, smoking fire, you find places to sit on the fur-covered floor. The sloping walls of the lean-to are hardly visible behind hangings woven of roots and twisted bark-cloth. Calna sits crosslegged, opposite the entrance; a length of scarlet spider-silk drapes the wall behind her, billowing softly with her every motion.

The Tell-Woman is a young woman aged before her time. Her hair is prematurely white, and harsh lines mark the corners of her mouth. The white-fogged orbs of her eyes are obviously sightless, but she follows your move-

ment with uncanny accuracy. When you are seated, she speaks to the youth in a raspy sing-song, "Stay and hark, Orelan. This Tell be yours, too."

Your guide sits by the doorflap as Calna sprinkles more incense on the flames of the small fire pit. She begins to hum to herself, a tuneless drone, rocking back and forth where she sits. Incense twines about her in spiral patterns. Her eyelids flutter and shut, then she begins to speak.

"Seen you coming for a long time, hmmm. Following, never catching, chasing you have been—and chased, too, by the hulderfolk. Hallik thinks he's caught your quarry. So he has, 'til the gates open again and let them out. A man, a young woman and a dragon work to that end. Ignorant folly. Might work, might not; no telling with dragon's knowledge."

Her eyes flick open and she stares at you as if she could see. "If dragon slayers escape the Pillars of the Moons, the Golden Dragon will die. Those who come out of the Pillars come with power, and one among them has the knowing to use it. You must leave here to stop them, but hulderguests don't leave Summerhome. Elves won't help you, changelings can't. Seek in the Outlands for She Who Guards the Path: Kief, the Ethereal Dragon."

CALNA'S VISION

Calna cannot elaborate much on the details of her vision, but background information is given here so the DM can appropriately tailor her responses to questions.

The Tell-Woman has seen Tavin, Derry and Gabus attempting to open the Moongates at the Pillars of the Moons. If the PCs were captured by hulders in the canyon, Gabus and the others were kept from viewing events by elvish magic. Now the NPCs mistakenly believe that their companions vanished in the canyon along with the dragon slayers.

Alternatively, if the adventurers have lost touch with the NPCs following a "Moonlight Revel" abduction, Calna knows that Gabus, Tavin and Derry searched for the adventurers for some time, but were forced to give up when they stumbled across the dragon hunters' trail and had a chance to apprehend the evildoers. The NPCs caught up with them just in time to witness the dragon slayers being trapped in the Moongates. Not knowing where else to go, and thinking it remotely possible that their adventuring companions are trapped there as well, the copper dragon, knight, and Derry have set themselves to solving the puzzle of the Pillars and Moons. Gabus knows from ancient lore that the Moons are portals, not death traps; he is rightfully concerned that the dragon slayers might emerge again and continue their course of evil unless prevented from doing so.

The Golden Dragon referred to is Amanthus, the ancient gold dragon who has sent out the call to the Othlorx to gather in a few months time for a conclave. Amanthus is the only gold dragon left of significance in Taladas. Kief, "She Who Guards the Path," is the ethereal dragon who lives in the Outlands of Summerhome.

Changeling Hospitality

Orelan will guide PCs to the edge of Kief's territory if they want to go there following this encounter. Orelan can also tell PCs if asked that it is hulder magic which opens or closes the entrance into Summerhome; changelings are not capable of doing this for the PCs.

PCs are welcome to sleep and live with the changelings, but they are reluctant to guide PCs openly around Summerhome lest they incur the wrath of hulderfolk for mingling with shunned guests. Any assistance they offer is subtle. They might provide daggers or other concealable weapons, rope, basic food supplies, footgear, etc.—commonplace things to make the PCs' task easier. They cannot offer much else in the way of help.

E. CRAFTSMEN'S STOOP

In this region, woods give way to fields with scattered copses and rocky table-like outcroppings. This is where hulders do work that is not suited to the treetops. Some weaving is done here on large looms; there are dye-vats, lathes for woodworking, brewing kettles and carving blocks. craftsmen and women here create things and chat amongst themselves while they do so.

Almost any type of handicraft can be found here. If a knowledgeable PC approaches a craftsman to talk about a familiar activity, the hulder can be drawn into conversation (+5 to reaction roll).

Bordering the Outlands here is a region filled with giant spiders. They prey on Outlands creatures and things from the other-worldly mists, and are trained not to harm the hulders who periodically harvest their webs. But the player characters are clearly not hulderfolk or changelings, and the spiders will consider them fair game, especially if anyone comes near or acts threateningly.

If PCs head for the Outlands directly after passing through Craftsmen's Stoop, they enter giant spider territory. The spiders can be avoided by passing through any of the neighboring Summerhome regions before entering the Outlands.

Giant Spiders (3): AC 4; MV 3, Wb 12; HD 4+4, hp 29, 24, 17; #AT 1, Dmg 1d8; AL CE; Size L (12'); Morale 13; THACO 17. SA bite victims must save vs. Poison or die. There is no treasure in this lair area, which is scoured periodically by hulderfolk.

Each of these spiders has a large web in or near the place it

attacks the PCs. If PCs should fight the spiders with fire, igniting the webs, there is a 40% chance for the fire to spread to the surrounding trees. If this takes place, 2d10 hulderfolk arrive to put out the fire within 1d3 rounds. If they catch PCs in the area and realize their involvement, the guilty characters are *polymorphed* to rats on the spot and shooed into the woods.

F. MEADOWS OF SPORT

Hulderfolk gather here to run and play games. Here they hold dances, butterfly races, and competitions in creative illumination with *dancing lights* and *faerie fire*. PCs are not welcome to join in these games, but can stand around and watch the activities taking place.

Whenever PCs first enter this area, they attract the attention of brownies, who will approach them and talk. These brownies live in the other-planar half of Summerhome, and consider the hulderfolk to be their neighbors. They visit and join in the play here, but do not live closely with the elves, who do not behave with quite the scrupulous standards the brownies prefer in their friends.

Brownies (6): AC 3; MV 12; HD 1/2, hp 3; #AT 1, Dmg 1d2; AL LG; Morale 11; Size T (2'); THACO 20. SD save as 9th level cleric. Once per day can cast *protection from evil*, *ventriloquism*, *dancing lights*, *continual light*, *mirror image*, *confusion* and *dimension door*. If cornered and unable to use spells they fight with their (very) short swords.

If these brownies can be convinced that the player characters have good intentions, have been treated unfairly by the hulderfolk, and some (if not all) are Lawful Good in alignment, they will befriend the PCs and can be helpful in several ways.

There is a 50% chance that a brownie, if asked politely, will serve as a guide for PCs in Summerhome. This brownie will further volunteer the information that the only two ways out and back into Taladas are through the Banquet Glade or through a planar passage guarded by Kief, the ethereal dragon.

If asked to do so, the brownies will investigate where the PCs' belongings are being kept and bring back the report that they are in the treasure cave behind the waterfall in Hallik's Court.

G. OUTLANDS

The Outlands are the region where the substance of Summerhome blends into misty woods, which then become solid banks of fog. This formless substance marks the border of the Ethereal Plane, but it is for the most part not a penetrable border. Some few creatures innately capable of traveling between the Ethereal and the Material Planes wander across this line, and some of the animal denizens of Summerhome build dens or hide in the foggy near-Ethereal places.

However, most inhabitants of Summerhome, including the player characters (except Suldrun), cannot penetrate the curtain of fog at all. If individuals wander into it and go far enough, they find themselves emerging again in Summerhome forests. Persons who become ethereal or astral in Summerhome have no better luck crossing this boundary, which is a magical barrier extending through several planes at once. Exit is only possible through the Banquet Glade.

For every hour characters spend exploring the mists of this border region, there is a 1 in 6 chance that they will encounter one of the following creatures. Adventurers who intentionally seek out Kief run into the ethereal dragon automatically.



Border Ethereal Encounters

1. phase spider
2. basilisk
3. aerial servant
4. border badger
5. ghost
6. ethereal dragon

1. Phase spider

AC 7; MV 6, Wb 15; HD 5+5, hp 34; #AT 1, Dmg 1d6; AL N; Size L (14'); THACO 15. SA shifts out of phase and appears only just before attacking, giving it -3 on initiatives; usually attacks from behind (+4); victims must save vs. Poison (at -2) or die.

The phase spider can be seen at all times by characters who are ethereal themselves; otherwise it is visible only when attacking. This spider will not attack unless attacked or unless someone in the party attacked the giant spiders in Craftsmen's Stoop.

2. Basilisk

AC 4; MV 6; HD 6+1, hp 38; #AT 1, Dmg 1d10; AL Nil, THACO 15. SA gaze turns victim to stone if save vs. Petrification fails.

This basilisk lives in the parallel Material Plane world which shares this space with Summerhome. While its physical form cannot be attacked through the foggy semi-ethereal border here, its gaze weapon is as effective as ever. A PC who makes an effort to attract its attention must save vs. Petrification or is turned to stone.

3. Aerial servant

AC 3; MV Fl 24 (A); HD 16, hp 82; #AT 1, Dmg 8d4; AL N; Size L (8'); THACO 5. SD Hit only by magical weapons.

This air elemental is going about its business as ordered by a Thenolian priest who recently summoned it. PCs detect the servant as it moves through this border area, its large humanoid form dimly visible as it speeds through the ethereal mists.

PCs see the figure apparently moving directly toward them. If they do not act hostilely and let it pass without interfering, it goes on about its business. If the characters attack it, the aerial servant defends itself, physically tossing its attackers aside with its great strength before continuing on its way.

4. Border badger

AC 4; MV 6, Br 3; HD 1+2, hp 10; #AT 3, Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d3; AL N; THACO 19.

This ordinary badger likes to lair in the misty twilight of the border region. His burrow is not very noticeable. This encounter result indicates that the badger is surprised by the player characters, who accidentally stumble across his territory. The startled animal attacks with no warning as if cornered.

5. Ghost

AC 0; MV 9; HD 10, hp 59; #AT 1, Dmg age 1d4x10 years; AL LE; THACO 11. SA besides the aging effect described below, this ghost has no other special attacks while sequestered behind the magical border barrier of Summerhome.

Ghosts are sometimes drawn to this border area because of the vibrant lifeforce they sense in Summerhome. They are unable to move through the magical boundary of the hulderfolk home, but persons who approach that barrier risk having this ghost materialize in front of them in an attempt to contact the living.

Although PCs need not fear a physical attack, the mere sight of the apparition might well have its own dire effect.

Characters viewing this ghost must save vs. spells or age 10 years and flee in panic for 2d6 turns. Priests of 7th level and greater are immune to this effect, while all other characters of 9th level and up are allowed to add +2 to their saving throw.

6. Ethereal Dragon

When PCs run into Kief, read this out loud:

Fog swirls ahead of you, then parts and reforms. There is the distinctive hint of a dragon shape in the mists, here a wing, there an arched neck, looming and looking down at you. The figure moves to block your way—and when the vaporous wings flex and border mists are blown past your face, you realize this is no trick of your imagination. It is something real.

If Whitewing is with the group, the pseudodragon flies immediately back to the PC he has adopted, perches with a frantic clutch on that person's shoulder, and hunkers down, intimidated into submission by Kief. If questioned, Whitewing says, "Shhh! Bow!" and watches the ethereal dragon intently.

Kief (ethereal dragon): AC -1 (on Material Plane), 2 (on Ethereal Plane); MV 12, Fl 24 (B); HD 6, hp 42; #AT 3, Dmg 1d4/1d4/2d6; AL CG; Morale 15; THACO 15. SD Can turn ethereal at will; when in ethereal form, can be hit only with magical weapons. SA disorienting breath; typical combat tactic is to maneuver invisibly (i.e., ethereally), materialize long enough to deliver a physical attack, then go ethereal again for more maneuvering.

Spells:

1st level: charm person, comprehend languages, *identify*, *detect magic*

2nd level: *detect evil*, *invisibility*, *know alignment*

3rd level: *dispel magic*, *suggestion*

4th level: *dimension door*

The dragon's breath attack is a cloud of mist that blinds and disorients living creatures so that such targets lose all sense of direction. Even the difference between up and down becomes uncertain. If the victim is on the ethereal he is then incapable of navigating anywhere; if on the Material, he falls to the ground, unable to stand up for the duration and is -6 to hit (-4 for blindness, -2 for disorientation). Spell effects last for 1d4 + 1 turns. Even if the breath weapon has no effect on characters, it lingers in the affected area with the same results as an *obscurement* spell.

Ethereal dragons resemble white dragons in their body lines, but have a blurred, mist-shrouded form when corporeal. (Note that those who appear in snowy terrain are almost impossible to distinguish from white dragons until they use one of their special abilities.) They spend most of their time in a phased state halfway between material and ethereal, thus appearing rather ghostlike to most observers. They speak the tongue of dragons and can communicate with telepathy.

These creatures bear a distant relationship to ki-rin. They patrol the ethereal and guard sensitive areas, either as favors to good-aligned entities, or because they feel compelled or obligated to do so for an overriding personal reason. Kief is the dragon who guards the ethereal gateway out of Summerhome. The hulderfolk fear and respect her, and generally avoid her as much as possible.

Kief is knowledgeable about the history of the hulders, how Summerhome was created, and the parallel Prime Material plane which co-occupies this space. If she wishes to, she can permit passage into the ethereal through a wormhole which she guards. Only Kief knows the precise location of

this gateway in these shifting mists, but during the course of this adventure she cannot be persuaded or forced to let anyone through. The PCs can use this exit from Summerhome only if they defeat the ethereal dragon and find the wormhole on their own.

Kief is at first intrigued by the PCs, since no one ever visits her, then suspicious if they persist in trying to explore the ethereal borders of the Outlands. Kief should be played as an enigmatic, reserved figure. She has a dry sense of humor, and is willing to help if she perceives a legitimate reason to do so.

Unless Kief has an exceptionally good reaction to PCs, she will not help them out of hand, but must be convinced to do so by the urgency and logic of the adventurers' plea. Kief has the following tidbits of information to give the PCs; these comments should be worked into conversation with the dragon.

Especially if the characters are here as a result of the "Moonlight Revel" encounter in Chapter 3 and they have not yet heard that the dragon slayers are trapped in the Pillars of the Moons, include Kief's remark #4. Comments may be omitted or delivered in any order.

If characters are reluctant to talk to Kief, she addresses them first, asking why they are in Summerhome and what they are doing here in the Outlands.

1. "The only way you can leave here is through the Banquet Glade. There, the planes lie closest and the gateway is most easily opened by hulder magic."

2. "Do you need shelter? Stay with the changelings in the Vale. They will make you welcome."

3. "Don't press the hulderfolk for attention; attention of that kind is often unwanted. Do you yearn to spend your life as a pig or a rat? Then leave them alone when they gather in groups, or you'll experience their magic first-hand."

4. "Know you of the Moongates? The dragon slayers you followed are trapped there now—until they find a key to open the gates.

"The Pillars of the Moons were once a place to learn magic, or speak with those who did. Yet the gates are only open when the guardian statues live, and they live only during the conjunction of the moons. Then, the key to the lock must be found. There are some, known to mages. There are others, known to bards. Listen at Hallik's Court, and you will hear what I mean."

If characters ask more questions about the Pillars of the Moons, Kief can share with them the information in "The Pillars' Origin," Chapter 3.

Once Kief is convinced to help the players, she gives this advice:

"There is one other way out of Summerhome. It lies through the Banquet Glade as well. Seek in Hallik's treasure trove behind the waterfall at Court. There is stored a *cloak of passage*, which lets the wearer and what he touches step from one plane to another. With it, you can move through the Glade and into Taladas."

Kief is uncertain of the full extent of the cloak's abilities or any of its limitations. Speaking through the dragon, the DM can give more or fewer clues to PCs as needed. The details of the treasure trove are provided at "Hallik's Court," while the cloak is described under "Hulderfolk Magical Items."

The dragon also provides directions to the Pillars of the Moons from this location. PCs discover it is only a few hours east of Summerhome.

FREEDOM

After moving throughout Summerhome, PCs should have collected enough clues and information to lead them to the *cloak of passage* as their passport out of hulder captivity. If PCs are lacking any essential clues, create NPC encounters which give them the needed information. Hulders in the Banquet Glade will not be slow to realize what the PCs are doing if they depart in broad daylight, but will pursue them right away. At night the Glade area is unguarded, but there are guards posted just outside Summerhome, on the Taladan hillsides.

The characters' best chance to get away is to do so with stealth, and bluff their way past the Taladas guards. Lax sentries do not even query persons leaving Summerhome if they move as if certain of themselves, since guards do not recognize the cloak and do not expect "guests" to be leaving on their own. Any reasonable ruse should get the party past these guards without difficulty.

If sentries become suspicious, or if PCs are chased by hulderfolk from within Summerhome, it is best to flee as soon as possible. Guards give chase, and fight to subdue prisoners. For every six guards present, one is a spellcaster who knows *sleep* and the reverse form of *enlarge*.

Hulder Guards (2d4): AC 5; MV 12; HD WA2, hp 12; #AT 1, Dmg by weapon; AL N; THAC0 19. Like all elves, these guards are 90% immune to sleep and charm spells. They are each armed with short bow and short sword, and wear *studded leather* +1. Each has Hunting proficiency (11).

Maze Spell. There is a combination *maze* spell and *hallucinatory terrain* surrounding Summerhome hill. To see who might be affected by the illusion, let each PC save vs. spells. Failure indicates the possibility of losing one's way. Next, let each PC who failed make a Wisdom check. Those who fail this roll are not paying attention to the countryside in their headlong dash to freedom, and thus are not affected by the *maze*, even if though the earlier failed save indicates otherwise. Characters not disoriented by this magic can help others out of the area.

If characters do become lost, let them save vs. spells each turn to see if they win free of the illusion. In the meanwhile, 1d6 hulderfolk guards have a 30% chance of locating the bespelled characters each turn.

If the party escapes the immediate vicinity of the hill, they manage to give the hulderfolk the slip. If for some reason they do not head to the Pillars of the Moons, Kief can appear from the ethereal and suggest that a copper dragon and friends can use their help in that place.



CHAPTER 5: THE PILLARS OF THE MOONS



DM's OVERVIEW

Once free of Summerhome, PCs realize that it is the night of the triple conjunction, and that the dragon hunters will be able to escape tonight. Hurrying to the Pillars, they find Derry, Tavin, and Gabus camped just outside, for lack of any better place to wait for their friends. Once in the canyon, they meet the dragon hunters; the battle that was averted at the end of Chapter 3 swings back into action.

Be sure to read completely through this chapter before beginning the fight; it's impossible to direct the flow of such a melee by reading from section to section as the fight is taking place.

Assuming our heroes win, and that they question any captives, they realize there is a much larger conspiracy underway against all Taladan dragons. Gabus summons more dragons, and they hasten with their captives to Cloud Mesa, the lair of Amanthus, ancient gold leader of the Othlorx.

CONJUNCTION

PCs can find the Pillars of the Moons within a few hours by following the directions they were given in Summerhome. The distant glow of *faerie fire* glimpsed occasionally through the woods should remind them of not-so-distant pursuit—although PCs will have no further encounters with hulderfolk in this adventure.

They are moving in complete darkness—there are no moons in the sky. Eight weeks of Taladan time have elapsed while with the hulderfolk. It is the time of the conjunction of the three new moons, when Solais, Lunais, and Angomais

are all dark. Spellcasters affected by this and the woods-wise notice this shortly after they leave Summerhome. Characters who keep track of lunar phases will be surprised that the conjunction is tonight, not realizing until now that time passed differently while in Summerhome.

All wizards of fourth level and greater experience this triple new moon alignment with cumulative adjustments of +1 to saving throws, +2 spells gained, and no change in spell casting level. However, characters at this point will probably not have the time to stop (DM's discretion) and memorize additional spells before arriving at the Pillars. If necessary to prevent delay, remind them that the Moongates can be opened, as Kief said, during the conjunction of the moons. This one begins soon, at midnight, at which point the hunters can escape from the Moongates.

REUNION

When the party arrives at the Pillars, read the following out loud. If they have not been here before, preface this with the first description in "Guardians of Stone" (pp. 28-29).

A lone campfire flickers at the mouth of the narrow canyon. Beside it sits Derry, leaned comfortably up against the bulk of Gabus, who is stretched out on the first few climbing flagstones. A sudden whoop from just up the hillside startles them to attention—Tavin is waving his bow at you in excited greeting. Derry jumps to her feet and starts toward you, while even Gabus stirs to cock his head in your direction.

Depending on the circumstances under which the party was separated from the NPCs, Tavin and friends confirm whatever details PCs have learned during their stay in Summerhome. In either case, these three briefly witnessed the opening of the Moongates and the dragon slayers disappearance, at least some having been attacked by the guardian statues. Statues of ogres, they report, still litter the canyon. Unable to determine the whereabouts of the adventurers, the trio decided to stay near the Pillars of the Moons. Gabus knows enough of his ancient lore to realize the dragon hunters might well emerge again, either intentionally or accidentally, possibly during a conjunction.

When other copper dragons who were searching for the dragon hunters heard of their fate, they considered the death of Narn to be avenged, and have politely bowed out of what they consider to be Gabus' obsessive pursuit of a dead end. The other dragons have returned with their knights to Carrendown. Tavin and Derry have had no choice but to stay with Gabus. The monotony of eight weeks of fruitless guard duty have been broken up with hunting expeditions and with dragon knight training for Derry. What Tavin began as a pastime has turned into a dedicated effort, for Derry shows real talent in this profession and Gabus tolerates working with her to please his partner. The teenager has mastered the rudiments of aerial riding, and is learning the basics of the dragon lance and saddle.

FEATURES OF THE CANYON

A., B., and C. Guardians. These statues are the forms of ancient spirits associated with the moons. When one moon is full and the others new, the full-moon-aligned statue uses its gaze attack on targets of other alignments. During this conjunction all moons are new, and no statues attack.

Guardian Statues (6): AC -5; MV 0 (12 if off pedestal); HD 18, hp 110 each; #AT 1, Dmg special; MR 20%; AL varies. SA gaze weapon transports target into the interior of the Pillars of the Moons; gaze automatically hits any target in line of sight; SD can be hit only with +2 weapons or greater. Guardians also exist on the ethereal plane and can attack there as well.

Guardians can leave their pedestals only to defend the ravine if the structure of the Pillars of the Moons is threatened. Otherwise they do not step down. Guardians are magical constructs and cannot communicate with the PCs.

The Goliskavarr (**A**) are good-aligned statues; the Purandarr (**B**) are neutral; the Urganarr (**C**) are evil. At one time this was a place of testing and conference for wizards. The guardians continue to protect the Pillars, ensuring that persons who are here when the Moongates are activated actually enter the complex without loitering outside. This once helped prevent confrontations between factions in the canyon of the Pillars, and ushered in those who were reluctant to face their testing. Now it traps the unwary.

(**D**) is the location of rough natural stone steps leading into the ravine.

A stone staircase at (**E**) leads upward through an arch formed by the body of a stone sphinx. The staircase leads to the ridge above.

Darkness. Because the only light this night are the randomly flashing and glowing Moonbeams, all melee combat is at -1, and all missile combat is at -2. Snipers hidden in shadows are even more difficult to see; they are -1 harder to be hit.

WHEN THE GATES OPEN

If the PCs are present when the Moongates open, read this out loud:

Moonglow suddenly fills the canyons. Silver and red light and stark black shadows blaze from galleries and balconies. Statues stir, and a curtain of mingled light forms against the walls behind the central, robed statues.

Statues reassemble as described in "Moongates" (p. 30). All become animated and move restlessly on their pillars, but none attack PCs or NPCs.

ETHEREAL EFFECTS

If PCs pass through a Moongate, they find themselves in a foggy open area. Guardian statues on their pedestals are clearly visible here, but the canyon walls and galleries of the physical plane have vanished. This place, similarly to Summerhome, is a pocket dimension between the Prime Material and the Ethereal planes. The PCs find themselves in the "foyer" of the Pillars complex.

Exploration in the Pillars interior is beyond the scope of this adventure. The place was a training ground for wizards, a place to test one's skills, learn new ones, and confer on neutral territory with spellcasters of other alignments. Magical artifacts can be found in the mists of the Pillars, and forbidden knowledge can destroy the mind of the overly-curious.

Time runs oddly here and PCs should realize after the battle that they will fail the dragons of Taladas if they linger. Future exploration can be developed by the DM if desired.

Within the Pillars (past a balcony Moongate) there is a "ground" and it is "downward." Characters cannot float about as they would on the Ethereal Plane, or move by thought alone.

Objects and animated illusions can be formed in this dimension with an act of willpower. If a character imagines that the ethereal fog nearby has just formed into the shape of a chair, it does so. An imagined skeleton can form, and move as the creator pictures it doing so. Such objects appear real but are semi-material. Although they can obscure a line of sight, characters can pass through such objects as if *slowed*. Missiles flying through are -2 to hit unless magical.


The creation of ethereal forms is a knack picked up with some experimentation after being here a while. They are not magical illusions per se and cannot be disbelieved. Neither do they have a real power to harm. The blows of attacking undead, for instance, pass harmlessly through a person's body. PCs who observe the phenomenon can try their hand at it if they realize that only personal willpower, not spellcasting, is involved. Characters with psionics realize this immediately. PCs must make a successful Wisdom check to successfully form the ether. Among Anishta's party, Anishta, Kohver, and Dagobert can create ethereal forms.

THE BIG FIGHT

There are basically three ways in which this climactic battle can begin. For each possibility, a brief summary of the initial course of action follows.

PC Initiative. If, upon leaving Summerhome, the party proceeds to the canyon immediately and doesn't waste much time reuniting with Gabus, Tavin, and Derry, they will get into the canyon before midnight. If they then open the Moongates with the hulderfolk song, they will catch the dragon hunters off-guard and gain the initiative.





Even Start. If they reach the canyon before midnight, but fail to open the gates, they will be standing in the canyon when the hunters emerge at midnight, and neither side will have a jump on the other.

Dragon Hunter Initiative. If the party delays on the way to the Pillars or spends too long reuniting with their friends, it will be past midnight when they enter the canyon and the hunters will have set up an ambush.

PC INITIATIVE

The gateway into the Pillars can only be opened during a moon conjunction. In that, Gabus' recall was correct. However, to enter from the outside a "key" is required: the snatch of spellsong PCs should have heard at Hallik's Court in Summerhome. Characters with singing proficiency who have heard the hulder bard perform the song can repeat it with a successful skill check. Those without proficiency can sing it properly only on a die roll of 19 or 20 (1d20).

If the hunters are surprised by the PCs, one of two things happen. If their first clash takes place at missile range distance (as with spell or missile attacks), the NPCs have time to gather their wits and will attempt to follow their battle plan as outlined below in "Dragon Hunter Initiative."

On the other hand, if PCs surprise individuals at close range with melee combat, it becomes every man for himself in the immediate area. NPCs outside of melee range will rush into the fray to help their friends only if it looks like they are not badly outnumbered and if their morale checks are successful. Otherwise, unengaged NPCs flee the area, while others fight for their lives and try to escape as well. Characters use the strategies outlined below.

Overall, as long as the PCs have arrived before midnight and know how to open the Moongates, the DM should allow them to make the best reasonable use of their advantage.

EVEN START

If PCs never heard the song or fail to render it properly, the NPCs within the Pillars complex succeed in opening the gates on their own, at midnight. In that case, the gates flare to life at a random moment and the hunters exit, not expecting to encounter any resistance in the canyon.

If both parties have no time to establish an organized course of action, a free-for-all results. The hunters will try to put into action the strategy they've worked out (described in "Dragon Hunter Initiative"), but the action will most likely dissolve into a cluster of one-on-one fracas.

DRAGON HUNTER INITIATIVE

While the party and their three friends are taking stock, the dragon hunters are cautiously emerging from the ethereal interior of the Pillars, the Moongates having opened. They notice the flickering shadows caused by the fire at the mouth of the canyon, and correctly deduce that their pursuers are preparing for their exit from the Pillars.

The lower half of the ravine walls in the Pillars canyon have been worked into a series of galleries extending the length of the defile. Stairways concealed in the back of these walkways give access to the galleries and balconies one level above. Where each lower gallery ends, an enclosed ramp connects to the next through the solid rock of the cliff, or leads up to the second level.

NPC Positions

Refer to the map (pp. 31-32) while reading this.

The positions held by specific dragon hunters are marked

with characters' names.

"O" and "D" mark the location of ogres and draconians in the ambush party. If the three draconians have been encountered and killed earlier, they should be eliminated from this encounter unless the DM decides that using these snipers gives the player characters a better challenge. If there are no draconians available, Pollip and Tekolo serve as snipers at the draconian locations, with Dagobert as backup when he is done spellcasting.

Remember that three of Anishta's ogres are currently stone statues. All friendly ogres (if the party has previously made any ogish allies) are also present in stony silence—whether or not the party has been here previously, their ogre friends have, having arrived just in time to be ambushed and then turned to stone along with Anishta's ogres.

If the PCs were present on that occasion, place their stoned ogre friends where they were caught by the beams. If the PCs weren't present (having been stopped short by hulder traps), place the friendly stoned ogres randomly throughout the canyon.

Ambush Tactics

No offensive action is taken by the NPCs until the adventurers move past location A, the Goliskavarr statues, and into area B, between the colonnaded balconies. When that happens, Tekolo, Dagobert, and the two remaining ogres have moved to the rear of the party, cutting off their retreat. As the PCs walk into area B, they come into range of Pollip and the draconian snipers concealed in deep shadow behind balcony pillars. Kohver and Anishta are at the northern end of area E, at a safe distance for undisturbed spell casting, but close enough to charge into combat if needed.

Pollip waits until the PCs are in the line of sight of all four snipers at their beginning positions (as marked on the map). When the adventurers or the majority of their party reach that point, the draconians open fire on the dwarf's shouted command.

With that shout as the signal, or at the first sign of unusual action among the PCs, Dagobert begins offensive spellcasting from the rear of the party, followed up with the charging attack of Tekolo. Kohver and Anishta cast spells at the same time, Kohver to aid their party, Anishta to hinder the enemy. The precise action of ambushing characters is outlined below.

Dagobert. This elf's spells are considered to be the most important part of the initial offensive, for even if PCs evade the snipers, Dagobert is expected to bottle them in the ravine, and throw them into confusion by a magical rear attack.

Dagobert opens his spellcasting with a stinking cloud, cast in the mouth of the defile but just out of range of where it would make the rearmost ambushers sick. He next casts *magic missile* — if anyone is airborne, Dagobert casts it at him (or them).

The elf saves his *lightning bolt* spell to cast against an enemy wizard, should it become evident which adventurer is one. Whenever this becomes clear in the course of this encounter, Dagobert unleashes the spell against that target. Meanwhile, he creates ethereal illusions wherever he thinks they might be useful (see "Ethereal Effects," below).

When Dagobert is done casting these spells, he readies his bow to pick off any PCs he can get a clear shot at from his balcony perch. He descends and nears the rear of the friendly ground forces (Tekolo and the remaining two ogres) only if the adventurers are clearly being defeated and confined to one area by the dragon hunters.

Snipers. Draconians use their light crossbows with deadly effectiveness, alternating shots after the initial volley so that

at least one is firing while the other(s) reload. Pollip uses her sling. After firing into the body of the unsuspecting PC party, sniper fire continues even after PCs take cover. The snipers attempt to keep the PCs bottled in sheltering galleries until Tekolo and the ogres can close and slay them. Once friendly ground forces are in their line of sight, sniping ceases but weapons stay at the ready, alert for new targets.

Dagobert reinforces the sniping as noted above. If PCs attack the snipers in their balconies, their reactions are detailed under "Dragon Hunter Melee Tactics."

If draconians have been encountered and killed earlier, they should be eliminated from this encounter unless the DM decides that using these snipers gives the player characters a suitable challenge. If there are no draconians available, Pollip and Tekolo serve as snipers at the draconian locations, with Dagobert as backup when he is done spellcasting.

Tekolo and Ogres. Once snipers open fire on the PCs, Tekolo and his ogre companions charge out at ground level and into the rear of the party. They trust to the first volley of missile fire to take the starch out of their victims. These ogres do their best to prevent PCs from ascending the stairs and interfering with the snipers on the balconies above. Tekolo and his companions reinforce this effort, and Kohver will join in if necessary. However, their primary objective is to kill the adventurers, not protect the snipers. Snipers are prepared for this possibility as noted under "Snipers."

Kohver. In the first two rounds of this ambush encounter, Kohver does nothing but create ethereal illusions (see "Ethereal Effects," below) and observe. If PCs put up effective resistance, and one or two of the adventurers seem to Kohver to be more formidable foes than the dragon hunters can defeat, the shaman casts *Summon Insects* and directs the resulting wasp swarm against the foremost of his opponents. In descending order of preference, Kohver targets an enemy priest, an enemy wizard, a powerful enemy fighter, or anyone wielding an offensive magical item with this insect attack. Use the wasp statistics under "Wasp Trap" if any PC is attacked in this manner. Kohver sustains the spell for all five rounds of its duration unless attacked himself. Kohver may be hard to spot while doing this because of the concealment offered by his *cloak of elvenkind*.

If the half-ogre shaman decides not to attack magically, he picks up his war club and charges into the fray as a normal ground combatant. Note that his approach may be difficult to detect because of the cloak he wears.

Anishta. Before combat commences, when the PCs are entering the ambush trap and walking toward area B, Anishta casts *bless* and centers it in the defile so that the snipers and the rear-most ambushers gain the benefits of the spell. She then casts *protection from good* on herself, and *silence 15' radius* on the first enemy spellcaster she identifies within the next three rounds of observation.

As soon as the parties engage, Anishta lingers to the rear. She creates ethereal forms of undead from the Thénol army, in an attempt to psych out the PCs (see "Ethereal Effects," below). Adventurers see a shifting number of skeletons and zombies come out of the mist and wade into battle against them. She, Kohver, and Dagobert can create stone walls and other obstacles to give cover from enemy fire or *slow* the PCs' advance.

Anishta then approaches the combat area, using *Shadowcaster* as necessary to cloak her activities. If the ambushers are losing or the battle is undecided, she proceeds to the nearest dead bodies (PC or NPC). Employing available cover or utilizing magical darkness cast by her weapon, Anishta collects the components in one round that she needs to *ani-*

mate dead. One round later, she completes her spell casting and the newly dead rise as one or more zombies to fight the PCs. Anishta can animate up to 7 HD of creatures this way, employing the spell twice if needed to create a total of 14 HD of zombies.

PC Zombie: AC 2 better than current armor, but no DEX modifier; MV 6; HD 2; #AT 1, Dmg 1d8; AL N; THAC0 19.

Ogre Zombie: AC 3; MV 6; HD 5; #AT 1, Dmg 1d10 + 2; AL N; THAC0 16.

Draconian Zombie: AC 4; MV 6; HD 3; #AT 2, Dmg 1d4/1d4; AL N; THAC0 18.

All Zombies: SD immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, death magic, poisons, and *cold*-based spells.

Cautious PC Advance

If PCs are advancing cautiously and are in strung-out single file, Pollip waits until the mid-point of the group is bracketed by her snipers. That way, the foremost and rearmost should have ogres to contend with, while the center is devastated by sniper fire.

Ambush Detected

If PCs detect ambushers and reveal this in their actions, the dragon hunters attack right away. Their first priority will be to bottle PCs up in the ravine, and force them into the open defile where snipers can shoot at them. Their other actions progress with haste, with less spell casting and more immediate combat action.

DRAGON HUNTER MELEE TACTICS

These notes are given to help provide tactics for the hunters during the middle of the melee. They apply to any of the three types of fight described above.

Dagobert. If this elf has any offensive spells left and time to cast them in, he does so. However, he has found a magical tome, and when he runs short of useful spells memorized he begins reading from the tome aloud. Capriciously experimenting, the elf casts spells directly off the page, believing he can always find another such tome somewhere in this place. Spells listed below are cast randomly, since he has no idea what each one is until he is casting it.

Spells:

1. *fumble*
2. *pyrotechnics*
3. *cloudburst*
4. *shout*
5. *scare*
6. *dispel magic*

Otherwise, Dagobert fights with the long sword if attacked and may supplement this with his throwing dagger if there is time. If there is no clear avenue of escape, Dagobert surrenders as soon as he is out of the reach of other dragon hunters, and swears any sort of cooperation that will save his skin. This elf is a treacherous liar who will do anything to confuse the PCs and lull or distract them long enough for him to escape, whether that takes minutes or days.

Kohver fights viciously if cornered, but seeks any diversion to cover his escape. If he has time, he casts any offensive spells which might buy him time or distance from capture and defeat. He prefers to wield a club, with which he is most comfortable in combat.

Pollip. This cantankerous dwarf, with her highwayman experience, knows when to call things quits. If the NPCs were sur-





prised and the PCs clearly have the initiative, Pollip beats a hasty retreat. She fights with grim determination only if squarely confronted and there is no way she can avoid it. However, the dwarf takes pains not to look like she is fleeing danger where Anishta, Kohver, Tekolo or Dagobert can see her actions and take them for cowardice.

If there is time and it seems useful, Pollip uses her *oil of etherealness* to escape. Alternatively, Pollip might bargain for her freedom if she is under great duress and is facing a single opponent (kender, gnome or dwarf) who looks like he can be bribed. In that case, the dwarf might offer some of her *bag of holding* treasure if the person will let her go. Make a Wisdom check to see if she can overcome her greed and bring herself to part with some of her treasure.

Tekolo wades into personal combat with a vengeance, ready and willing to fight to the death after inflicting as much damage on the enemy as possible. He does not go to the aid of others while engaged with an opponent and does not retreat unless forced to do so. The hurdu prefers to use his *warhammer +2* in melee.

Draconians. Although skilled snipers with crossbows, the draconians are next to useless in melee combat. If their morale breaks they cower in place, hiding behind outstretched hands and pleading for mercy in babbling voices. The draconians flee only if they can clearly outrun or evade their attacker—which is seldom the case against an opponent of average agility and speed. While begging to be spared they prattle how they can reveal the location of hidden treasure, tell of long-lost dragon lairs, and teach the heroes how to build traps and snares.

These claims, although intended to buy time until they can escape, are true. The draconians have noted where Pollip has been stashing caches of dragon treasure; from Anishta's dragon-hunting intelligence and personal knowledge the draconians know of several dragon lairs in the wilderness. Evidence of their trap-building skill has probably already been encountered on the trail.

Ogres. The ogres who follow Kohver's leadership also fight to the death, wielding their weapons with angry frenzy. If Kohver is in their line of sight and he is in need of help, or if they can hear him shout for aid, they break off combat to go to his assistance, even if this leaves them open to attack from the rear or sides. Otherwise they stand staunchly in place, not thinking to make use of natural cover (such as a wall at one's back), and give as good as they get.

Anishta. When on a losing side, Anishta evades combat or withdraws from it as soon as possible, interested only in saving her own skin. The priestess will not generally do this if her fellows are fighting nearby and actively looking to her for leadership, but if combat breaks down into separate personal engagements or looks like a losing proposition, Anishta takes care of herself first.

The priestess uses Shadowcaster to great advantage, employing the weapon's magical darkness to cover her escape and put her attackers at a disadvantage. She casts *obscurement*, *command*, and *enthrall* spells as needed to cover her escape.

Anishta's final refuge if losing a melee and cut off from escape is to wait until at least one wound is inflicted on her. Then she calls out her surrender, and in the momentary lull from combat casts *feign death* on herself. As a consequence she falls down, apparently dead, with the hope of reviving and escaping unnoticed shortly thereafter.

If the priestess is caught, she is unbending, proud, and tight-lipped. She is the most knowledgeable of NPC party

members; if she can be gotten to talk, she reveals the information below. Other NPCs know less, and the DM should make the information sparser if coming from them.

If all else fails (i.e., all hunters die or escape), have a dying hunter (preferably Anishta) spill the plot with a dying breath.

"We were hired to kill dragons. Any and all kinds. There's a bounty on all the Othlorx, a good one. Just bring in dragon ears as proof of kill, and you get paid good money. We started out from New Aurim in Thenol, but there's bounty agents in other places.

"I don't know who they represent; they never name that person. But someone rich and mighty and far away wants those dragons dead, bad enough to hire teams of hunters all over Taladas. I think it's to stop the dragons from getting together at a gathering Amanthus set for the fall equinox. Learned about that from a dragon, before I put him out of his misery. You've heard of Amanthus, I'm sure—the gold dragon the Othlorx cater to in the Steamwall. I hear there's bounty hunters on their way there too, to Cloud Mesa where Amanthus lairs. That death will be worth a fortune, that's for sure."

GABUS, TAVIN, AND DERRY

Not perceiving any special or immediate danger in the area, Gabus compromised his mobility for nearness to the scene of interest. The bulky dragon is unable to fly out of this ravine; he must walk up the far stairs or out through the canyons before he has room to stretch his wings. Inside the canyon the dragon fights as if under a *slow* spell because of the difficulty of maneuvering his bulk in such a constrained space. Gabus takes special care not to accidentally clobber friends while fighting under these conditions, and foregoes any attacks which threaten to hurt allies. Gabus cannot enter the Moongates (he is too large to fit behind the guardian statue), but if the fight comes into the ravine he does what he can there.

Tavin accompanies PCs into the fray, but Derry is posted in the ravine on an opposite balcony (with "PC Initiative") or at the mouth of the canyon (otherwise) to provide back-up sniper power.

BALANCING THE FIGHT

If useful for a balanced confrontation, during their stay in the Pillars, the NPC party has been whittled down to size by the hazards encountered inside the complex.

In addition, there are three enemy ogre statues, plus statues of however many friendly ogres accompanied the party on their search. If our heroes are winning the fight too handily, "randomly" reanimate one or more of the enemy ogres. If the hunters are beginning to win, and there are friendly ogre statues available, "randomly" reanimate a few of them. Do so at dramatic instances, just as a character is about to fall, if not for the timely intercession of an ogrish ally.

And finally, if necessary when the hunters appear to have prevailed, Tavin can charge Dagobert in an effort to stop his spellcasting so rapidly from the tome. Dagobert completes a *fireball* spell just as Tavin reaches him. Distracted by the dragon knight, Dagobert failed to aim it properly and it discharges at his feet, catching him and Tavin in its area of effect. The resulting explosion blows ethereal forms to tatters and throws the NPCs into confusion. After this interruption, PCs should be able to mop up the demoralized opposition.

CHAPTER 6: CLOUD MESA



DM's OVERVIEW

At the startling realization of the scope of the dragon hunters' plot, the party speeds to Cloud Mesa, the lair of Amanthus, the leader of all Taladan dragons. Running a draconic air blockade, they report their dreadful information to the ancient gold dragon, who recruits them for further work in the second module of the trilogy, *Dragon Knight*.

FLIGHT TO THE MESA

Gabus is galvanized by this news from the hunters. If Tavin has died he is grimly dedicated as well. He confirms that Amanthus has called a secret conclave in a few months time; all Othlorx are to attend. If PCs don't think of it themselves, Gabus insists that Amanthus be warned, both of the plot to kill dragons and the pending attempt on his own life.

The most emphatic way to disclose the plot to Amanthus is to fly a prisoner or two to Amanthus' lair, accompanied by PC escorts. If no captive hunters survive, then Anishta's bag of dragon ears should be shown to Amanthus. However, Gabus refuses to come anywhere near the bag which contained his mate Narn's ear; in fact, no dragon will bear such grisly evidence except indirectly—if some person will carry it, one dragon will agree to carry that person.

At dawn, the copper dragon departs to collect enough dragons to fly PCs and prisoners to Amanthus, and returns in late evening with volunteers from Carrendown. These dragons are his companions who gave up earlier on finding the dragon hunters. Chastised and concerned over the threat

Gabus has discovered, they have agreed to carry PCs and prisoners to the ancient gold dragon in the Steamwall.

They leave the next dawn. All mounts bear dragon knight saddles, and fly carefully so their untrained riders have the easiest possible journey. By mid-afternoon they reach Cloud Mesa—but this is dragon territory, uninhabited by people and rarely intruded upon by uninvited dragons. An attempt upon Amanthus' life has already been made; the gold dragon's defenses are alerted and bronze dragons fly guard duty near the mesa. Suspicious of all comers, they warn the copper dragons to turn back or land. Headstrong Gabus does neither, ignoring the threats or entreaties by riders, and the flight of copper dragons follows where Gabus leads.

Three bronze dragons move to stop your advance. They swoop out of the clouds above and your mounts suddenly dive for the ridges below. Treetops flash past your feet as the dragon knights wheel overhead, their initial charge evaded by the copper dragons' quick reactions.

Gabus shouts to the adventurers, "There's the mesa! We'll set you down, then go keep these pests occupied, or you'll never get to Amanthus! We'll hold onto the prisoners until we have time to set down and handle them properly!"

Dragons take turns hurriedly dropping off PCs. Gabus tells them to head for the cave opening visible up the side of the mesa. The dragons fly up to confront their attackers and cover the PCs' advance. As PCs start up a foot path to the lair's mouth, black dragons rise from the mesa butte to join the fight. Amanthus keeps these violent dragons on hand as shock troops. Screeching dragons clash high overhead.





GOLD DRAGON'S LAIR

Amanthus has faith in his own abilities and the dragons who guard him. Too much faith, perhaps; it has been centuries since anyone challenged him on his home turf. This dragon's lair is simple to enter and presents little danger. It is designed to impress humanoid visitors, and alert Amanthus to unexpected company. The dragon relies on his spells for personal protection if needed.

A. Crack of Doom. The entrance cavern is broad, crumbling, and in apparently bad repair. Rock narrows to a dark cleft to the north. PCs entering the passage trigger a magic mouth which cries in a deep booming voice, "Go no further! You are uninvited and unexpected! Stay here and you will be met." This alerts the gold dragon to visitors, but no one comes to meet them. Amanthus observes them quietly from the eastern passage (F).

B. Hot Spring Grotto. This is a favorite bathing and relaxation place for the elderly dragon. It is vacant now.

C. Audience Chamber. This chamber is crafted to impress, built in opulent human fashion out of style now for centuries. Marble and mosaic work decorate floor and walls. Carved pillars are decorative support for the high ceiling. A golden dias sports a throne, with elaborate draperies hanging on the wall behind. If Amanthus sees the characters march on in past the Crack of Doom, he hurries to the throne and sits there, awaiting their arrival.

The door to the east is open, leading to Amanthus' chambers. The door to the west is wizard locked. It leads to the more intricate parts of the dragon's lair where his treasure and other properties are kept. The bulk of this lair is outside the scope of this adventure, since it is expected that PCs are here to help Amanthus, not raid the most senior Othlorx's home. The traps and safeguards beyond this door would give pause to very high level characters and should clearly be out of the league of the PCs in this adventure.

D. Amanthus' Chambers. This is a spacious, sandy place where Amanthus naps or lounges in dragon form. His lengthier slumbers are done in security deep within his lair; this is a place to pause and relax after visiting the hot spring or returning from a morning flight.

E. Wishing Well. This tiled well was created by Amanthus for an amusement, after a custom he learned once among ancient humans. A scattering of silver and copper coins lie on the bottom, donations from curious visitors over the years. If a PC drops in a coin and makes a wish, it will be fulfilled if it is within the power of a water elemental to grant or perform. This result is not evident until the next time the PC is near water, but the wish can be fulfilled anywhere that there is a water elemental presence.

F. Rock Fall. The eastern side passage goes a short distance before it is blocked by a rock-fall. Actually this is a permanent illusion and can be passed by anyone who tries. Amanthus sometimes comes here in human form and peers out of the illusion to spy on whoever is in his entrance cave.

AMANTHUS

If PCs encounter Amanthus in his chambers, he is in dragon form—an ancient gold dragon; in the throne room, he appears as an elderly, white-haired human dressed vainly in doublet and hose. Amanthus is polite, reserved, and dour. He is surprised at the ease with which the party got past his dragon guards outside, until he learns they were aided by dragons themselves. Amanthus is not intimidated or frightened by the PCs' sudden appearance here; he quickly casts

know alignment and *ESP* to determine their intentions, and knows he can *dimension door* or *teleport* to safety any time he'd like. He entertains them with tolerance until they say something interesting, like explaining why they are here. Then the party has his undivided attention.

As soon as he realizes why they are here, Amanthus summons a servant (a shape-changed dragon from beyond the wizard-locked door), and orders that the attack against the copper dragons be halted immediately. He then grills PCs for every detail of what they have learned. As the pieces come together in his mind he arrives at certain conclusions and excuses himself for a few minutes to think. After a long silence, he turns to the party.

"I have no idea how many of us have been slain. I dismissed the rumors as exaggerations. Now it seems they were not. What most disturbs me is not the murder of dragons, but who ordered it, and why. Perhaps your prisoners can help with that answer, but I expect not.

"Is it to prevent our gathering in the fall? This won't stop us. But who found out about our plans? Who is powerful enough, and determined enough, to undertake this foul campaign against a race? These are the things I want answers to. We must know our enemy, before our gathering, if we are to make sound decisions then."

Amber eyes regard you seriously, and the dragon's lip quirks upward. "You have already proven yourselves. Will you undertake this for me? Find out who wants dragons dead so badly they spend a fortune and breed misery to accomplish it. You will be rewarded. More than that, you will have my gratitude. Will you do this, for the Othlorx and me?"

After PCs respond to Amanthus' request, let them bargain as necessary for their services and the reward they envision. Amanthus' attitude is that this is a good cause and they should be willing to help out, as long as incidental expenses are taken care of. However, the dragon's idea of "incidental expenses" approaches kingly in scale. This shouldn't be too clear to the PCs, but they will be amply rewarded (as the DM sees fit) for their efforts.

If characters do not choose to help the dragon, or if they ask for a delay before starting, Amanthus summons servants (bronze dragons) to take PCs to Trilon.

CONCLUSION

The closest human village is Trilon, where some of the bronze dragon knights live. Here PCs can find their copper dragon friends, recovering from their tussle with the black dragons. They are tattered but not much the worse for wear. PCs can stop here and resupply for further travels if they choose to leave Gabus and the copper dragons at this point.

Derry the fledgling dragon knight is taken under Gabus' wing; he and Tavin, if alive, will see to the completion of her training. PCs who wish to train as dragon knights may do so also; this is a good time in the sequence of the trilogy. Training is outlined in Chapter 7. Dragon knight skills will be useful, though not essential, in the third of this trilogy, where Derry reappears as a fully-trained dragon knight herself.

If the party reports back to the Baron, he is unhappy but resigned to the fact that his daughter has run off to become a dragon knight. He treats the PCs with fairness but little warmth, since they have been gone for an unreasonably long time in his view. Once their duty to him is discharged, they are free to fulfill any agreement with Amanthus.

The adventure continues with the second module of this DRAGONLANCE® game adventure trilogy, *Dragon Knight*.

CHAPTER 7: DRAGON KNIGHTS

Dragon Knights are a culture and a character class unique to the lands of Taladas. As their name implies, these people have a close rapport with dragons, and are skilled at riding and handling the creatures. Although other scattered groups of Dragon Knights exist in remote regions, those of the Conquered Lands are the largest and best organized. Those knights and their origins are described here.

DRAGON RETREAT

Human folk who pioneered the wilderness of the Conquered Lands knew that in their fathers' day copper dragons had been common in the rocky uplands of the region. Yet as villages and settlements grew, the absence of these creatures became increasingly evident. Unbeknownst to the settlers, these dragons, once chaotic good, had sworn neutrality and become the Othlorx, the Uninvolved. Shunned by their fellow dragons and distraught over the loss of their young, the Othlorx of Taladas withdrew from contact with people and dragonkind.

Territorial pioneers and hardy adventurers alike wondered where the once-populous copper dragons could have gone. The only evidence that they still inhabited the Conquered Lands was in their raids—sudden forays by lone dragons that were even more devastating for their unexpectedness, appearing swiftly out of nowhere and vanishing as rapidly thence. Rumors abounded about the reasons for the dragons' mass retreat before encroaching civilization.

Among a certain portion of the population—young, unattached pioneers and seasoned wilderness explorers—tales of abandoned dragon lairs and treasure hordes were especially appealing. These fanciful tales were supported by the occasional discovery of an inhabited lair and capture of the treasure within it. During the last century, the curious and the greedy have been lured into the highlands of the Conquered Lands in search of dragons and treasure. A handful have returned, with tantalizing reports of dragon sightings and a few close encounters. Of the others, nothing has been heard again.

DRAGON DISCOVERIES

Contrary to appearances, many of those who seek for copper dragons find them. Although dragons withdrew from more populous areas, persons with cunning and perseverance usually managed to locate them. The encounters of those who discover hidden dragon lairs in the uplands follow a common pattern. If an adventurer attacks a dragon first, the dragon responds with violence and fights to the death. Since these dragons tend to lair in communal groups, the entire dragon clan joins in the defense, which spells doom for their wayward attacker.

If instead an adventurer uses stealth to approach the dragon or talks with it first, the dragon will converse with the character. The dragon explains that since its lair (or nearby territory) has been discovered, it cannot risk letting the person go to spread the news. If the person responds with violence or treachery to this unspoken threat, the dragon kills him. However, there is an alternative which the Othlorx hopes for: the person may choose to stay, in which case he joins the community of Dragon Knights which has grown up in symbiotic relationship with the copper dragons of the Conquered Lands.

This curious society evolved from the experiences of the first dragon knight, Torloch Half-Elven. Torloch, a scholarly fighter/magic-user, had great curiosity about the dragons said to dwell in the uplands. Duranoc, the old copper dragon who eventually confronted the adventurer, was reluctant to kill the clever and charming half-elf, yet saw no legitimate way to let the intruder go. Torloch gave his word of honor that he would not betray the whereabouts of Duranoc's clan, and offered to stay to prove his word was good. Great rapport and understanding grew between dragon and half-elf; when Duranoc gave permission for Torloch to depart one year later, the adventurer chose instead to remain.

Since then, adventurers who are clever, wise, and who have a rapport with dragon-kind may be permitted to stay with their erstwhile captors. A sizeable community of dragon knights has grown up in the rocky highlands of the Conquered Lands. Bereft of their young, the Othlorx direct their frustrated paternal and maternal feelings into their relationships with the dragon knights, resulting in a close emotional bonding between knight and dragon. Dragon knights today live with the Othlorx out of love and mutual respect, not because either party feels obligated or compelled to honor the arrangement.

SECRECY

The existence of dragon knights is not intentionally kept a secret, but copper dragons have so little contact with the rest of the Conquered Lands, and the Knights live in such isolation, that few outsiders realize they exist. Dragon knights prefer to live in solitude, sharing only the company of the dragons and their own kind.

This existence is encouraged too by the fact that many dragon knights were persons with no reason to return to civilization: outlaws fled deep into the wilderness to escape justice, orphaned pioneers with no family ties to call them back, solitary explorers questing after adventure. Among these self-sufficient people a unique culture and society have evolved.

DRAGON KNIGHT SOCIETY

Dragon knights originally dwelt in the rocky caverns that served as lairs to the Othlorx. As their numbers grew, some moved into the surrounding valley floors and built small sheltered communities there. Where space permits, however, Knights prefer to live in caverns near their companion dragons. These are usually side caverns and rocky hollows too small or narrow to permit use by the dragons, but which connect to the larger dragon lair.

A strong, unshakeable rapport exists between the Othlorx and their Knights. These people provide grooming care, conversation, and companionship for their dragon friends. In turn, dragons hunt for their Knights, and carry them aloft on forays into the surrounding countryside.

It is common for a single person to become close companions with a single dragon, and these are the individuals who are most properly called Dragon Knights, members of a specific character class. The other inhabitants of this community are not Knights, per se, although all have cordial relations with the dragons. The companion of the eldest Othlorx in the clan is generally the acknowledged leader of the Dragon Knight community.





Knights come from many different backgrounds, but most have adopted a common, simple clothing style, grown out of the necessities of riding flying dragons.

Most Knights wear warm undergarments, and trousers and long-sleeved tunics of serviceable tanned leather. Leathern bracers protect the wrists and keep the sleeves from flapping loosely in the wind of flight. Close-fitting leather caps are popular, lined with wool or fur and often fitted with ear flaps for additional warmth at high altitudes. Gloves and hard-soled, thigh-high boots protect from the abrasive edges of dragon scales.

Most men are clean-shaven, with long drooping moustaches and long hair tied back in a braid. Women braid their hair in a similar manner. In general, neither men nor women cut their braids.

BEHAVIOR

Above all things, a Dragon Knight's word is his bond. He does not give his word lightly, and never speaks to obligate his dragon companion unless it is a dire emergency.

Once a Knight gives his word, he will fulfill it or literally die trying. These characters have a strict code of honor and are prickly about dishonorable actions; they go to great lengths to remove any shame they perceive themselves to have incurred. They accord their companion dragons all the honor and respect due any person.

Dragon Knights sometimes go on trading trips to outside villages, but in keeping with their word travel incognito and give no hint that they live with the fabled Othlorx.

These people are famed for their unflinching bravery in battle, conducted aback dragons in mid-air. This skill has been historically used in hunting forays against griffons and manticores, but the recent aggressions of evil dragons is beginning to prompt more and more skirmishes against those creatures.

RAPPORT AND PARTNERSHIP

Knight and dragon pair off as companions with unspoken agreement born of a mutual rapport. Older dragons are choosier and take longer to decide; younger dragons are more impetuous and go with their first impression. However, there are few hatchlings or very young among the copper dragons of the Conquered Lands, so most would-be Knights form this pair-bond with a dragon of mature adult age or greater. Once paired, the Knight remains with his dragon for life. Other partners are taken only if the first dies, and then only after a months-long period of mourning.

When creating NPC dragons to pair with PC Dragon Knights, special care should be taken to make sure each dragon has a distinctive personality. If the Knight believes he would like to bond with a particular dragon, the dragon's response is determined by a reaction roll as noted below.

Dragons, ever curious and inquisitive, will learn any practical or philosophical knowledge their partners have to teach them. In turn, Dragon Knights are taught most of their professional skills by their dragon partners. Dragons teach their Knights how to ride in flight, give them useful tips about air-borne combat, and share their knowledge of ancient lore, magic, and the spoken tongues of dragons. A Dragon Knight learns these things in stages, gaining skills as he advances in experience. More experienced Knights teach personal combat skills, but most of what a Knight knows comes from his dragon. Because of this tutorial method of learning, Knights are likely to become skilled in the same nonweapon proficiencies mastered by their dragons.

PLAYER CHARACTER

DRAGON KNIGHTS

A character can be of any race to live in a Knight community, but if he wants to gain the skills of the Dragon Knight class, he must be human, elf, or half-elf. Such characters may be of either sex, and any alignment which is compatible with that of their dragon. The Othlorx, for instance, tolerate only Knights who are of Neutral or Neutral Good alignment.

A Dragon Knight has minimum:

Intelligence 12
Wisdom 12
Charisma 12

Characters less insightful, intelligent, or charming than this simply are not tolerated in a long-term friendship by the Othlorx.

Dragon Knights use:

Warrior's experience point table for advancement
Warriors' THACO progression
Warriors' Proficiency Slots and Nonweapon
Proficiency Groups*

*However, they begin with only three weapons of proficiency and are limited to armor no heavier than chain mail. They do not use shields or swords, but may use any polearm or missile weapons they wish. One of their initial weapon proficiencies must be taken with the lance.

A character may be of any class when he applies to be accepted into dragon knight training. Since most training is conducted by the dragon who pairs with the character, first roll to see if the dragon accepts the PC as his partner.

There is a 50% chance for acceptance, with the following modifiers:

- +/- the character's reaction roll modifier
- 2 for every step the character's alignment differs from the dragon's
- +1 for contributing treasure to the dragon's horde, as long as the treasure is worth 1,000 stl or more in value (non-cumulative modifier).

If a person meets the criteria noted above, he can become a dragon knight. The basics of training are completed in 24 months minus the character's INT. Although training is completed relatively quickly, pursuit of this profession implies a life-long relationship with a particular dragon. The closeness of the tie and cooperation between dragon and knight precludes the character from actively pursuing any other professional class.

Therefore, once the career of Dragon Knight is embarked upon, the PC can no longer develop his expertise in any other class. If the character has other class skills, he becomes a dual-classed character unable to advance in previous professions.

Although the age range of available dragons has an influence, in most cases a character should be matched with a dragon of similar maturity. For example, a mature adult human or elf pairs best with a mature dragon. Since dragons age much more slowly than people, the knight will soon be much older than the dragon (from the dragon's point of view), but the initial bonding is best achieved if both dragon and knight approach it with the same maturity.



SPECIAL SKILLS

Dragon Knights gain the following special skills at the levels noted:

Level 1

gains Dragon Riding proficiency at no cost
uses a lance on dragon-back with no flight to-hit penalty
becomes immune to dragon awe

Level 3

uses a preferred missile weapon on dragon-back with no flight to-hit penalty
becomes immune to dragon fear
gains +1 to Dragon Riding proficiency

Level 5

gains proficiency in one dragon tongue at no cost. (This must be the language of the character's dragon partner, unless that has already been learned.)
becomes +1 to hit with lance when fighting from dragon-back

Level 6

gains +1 to Dragon Riding proficiency

Level 7

becomes +1 to hit with preferred missile weapon when fighting from dragon-back

Level 8

gains proficiency in one dragon tongue at no cost, or may improve proficiency by +1 in any dragon tongue already known

Level 9

gains proficiency in Ancient History at no cost

SPELLS AND DRAGON MAGIC

Characters who were previously Wizards can start to learn dragon magic once they have reached 6th level as a Dragon Knight. This means that any spell known by a dragon, which his Knight is capable of learning, can be acquired by the Knight and entered into his spellbook. This process does not follow a regular progression; it is up to the DM to determine if and when the dragon offers to share a spell in the course of adventuring together.

In addition, there are a few unique spells developed by Dragon Knight/Wizards. These can be learned whenever the DM determines the PC has the opportunity to acquire such a spell. These spells include:

1st Level

Dragon Tongues (Alteration)

Range: 0
Components: V, M
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 30-foot radius
Saving Throw: none

This spell bestows the same language abilities as *tongues*, but can be learned at a lower level and only gives knowledge of the languages spoken by dragons.

2nd Level

Dragon Message (Alteration)

Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 5 rounds/level
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: none

This spell functions similarly to *message*, but is intended to be used in flight to enable one dragon knight to talk to another knight or to a dragon.

It is not necessary to whisper the message; regardless of tone of voice or intervening wind, the message is clearly heard by the recipient. The caster need not point to his target; as long as there is a clear line of sight between them, the mental desire to speak to that person or dragon is sufficient.

3rd Level

Dragon Fall (Alteration)

Range: 100 yards/level
Components: V
Duration: 500 yards of fall/level
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: none

This spell has the same effect as *feather fall*, but is designed to be cast on dragons, with the intention of saving a dragon injured in flight from plummeting helplessly to earth. The spell allows the caster to effect one age class of dragon for every level of the spell caster. For instance, a 7th-level Dragon Knight/Wizard can cast this spell on any dragon up to Mature Adult in age.

As with other dragon knight spells, *dragon fall* will not work on other creatures or objects.

Wings (Alteration)

Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1d6 turns + 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: Creature touched
Saving Throw: none

Wings causes the target of this spell to sprout a set of wings like those of a dragon. The character can then fly at a rate of 18, and is maneuverability class B.

The wings spring from the character's shoulder blades; they will not appear if armor, clothing, or other restricting material is in the way.

Eye-Shield (Invocation/Evocation)

Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 hour/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: Creature touched
Saving Throw: none

When this spell is in effect, the target's eyes are protected from blasting wind and glaring sun, although there is no tangible barrier before the person's eyes. A Knight protected by this spell suffers no penalties to his vision or attack rolls due to wind, sun, or even sudden blasts when fighting or scouting on dragon back.

MAGICAL ITEMS

Some specialized magical items exist that are highly valued by dragon knights,

Potion of Dragon Sight

XP: 200

This potion bestows excellent vision on the imbiber. Under its influence, a character can see for three times his normal range of vision, and can see as well as a dragon at night (treat as infravision with twice normal range). While affected by this potion, a character suffers no range penalties for long distance attacks with missile weapons.

Cloak of Warmth

XP: 1,000

The cloak appears to be an ordinary garment of gray wool, hanging full and voluminous. When worn in flight (whether on dragon-back or other flying mounts), the lengthy folds of the cloak wrap themselves around the wearer's body in a magically warm and insulating embrace. The cloak does not hinder motion, and maintains a comfortable temperature no matter what the weather, the Knight's other garments, or how high an altitude is reached.

Dragon Whistle

XP: 200

A *dragon whistle* is used by dragon knights to summon their mounts and give flight and formation cues in aerial battle, where the wind might whip verbal commands away unheard. The device is a mundane whistle, enchanted with a *dweomer* which lets its sound carry for exceptionally long distances. The pitch of a *dragon whistle* cannot be heard by human ears, although sympathetic vibrations can be felt by anyone who is also carrying one. Each dragon knight has one or two such whistles. They are not essential for the knight to work with his dragon, but are a considerable help.

A *dragon whistle* is carved of bone. It does not compel any dragon to answer, although a particular dragon might appear when its knight's whistle is sounded. Such whistles have only curiosity value to persons who are not dragon knights.

Gateway Whistle

XP: 6,000

The *gateway whistle* is a *dragon whistle* crafted of crystal and enchanted with a special power. When this device is blown, a dragon in flight can pass between planes. The whistle must be blown by the Knight for one full round preceding transition to another plane. At the end of that time, a shimmering gateway appears in the air before the flying dragon. Only one dragon and knight can pass through the portal opened by a *gateway whistle*. If the pair do not fly through immediately, the gateway closes after one round.

The whistle functions as an *amulet of the planes*, giving random access to outer planes until the person blowing it experiments long enough to know what notes open which gateways. A person with a musical proficiency can figure out the logic of this after three random results. Other characters must get 3d4 random results before they can control the *gateway whistle*.

Torloch's Saddle of Comforts

XP: 4,000

Most dragon knights use saddles for a comfortable ride on their mounts. *Torloch's saddle*, however, was created to ease the rigors of long cross-country journeys on dragon-back. Its seat and safety straps offer a pleasant, secure ride, but its main attractions are the various pouches and what is concealed within them.

A *saddle of comforts* contains the following items in its pouches. Each may be used and replaced, then used again after at least 24 hours have passed. If the original item is not returned to its pouch within 24 hours, it loses its *dweomer* and no other magical item appears to take its place. There is a 30% chance for any saddle that is found to be missing 1d8 of its items.

1. *potion of dragon sight*
2. *decanter of endless water*
3. *cloak of warmth*
4. *potion of fire resistance*
5. *rope of climbing*
6. *tent of shelter*
7. *serpentine owl* (a *figurine of wondrous power*)
8. *horn of fog*
9. *pouch of food*
10. *iridescent spindle ioun stone* (sustains without air)

Most of the above items are self explanatory. The *ioun stone* is used when facing hostile dragons with breath weapons; the *potion of fire resistance* is similarly useful. The *horn of fog* is used for concealment. Two new items are described below.

A *tent of shelter* (XP 1000) looks like a small canvas tarp. When placed on the ground and its command word spoken, it forms into a shelter large enough for two people and up to 200 lbs of gear. At the entrance to the tent appears a small brazier of glowing coals for cooking and heating, and enough foodstuffs for a moderate meal. The Tent provides no magical protections for its inhabitants.

A *pouch of food* (XP 700) contains nuts, grain and dried fruit, foods suitable for a snack or as trail rations during lengthy travels. It supplies enough food for two meals in the saddle.



CHARACTER & CREATURE DESCRIPTIONS

PLAYER CHARACTER KITS

"The Rule Book to Taladas," in the *Time of the Dragon* boxed set, introduces Character Kits to help model the many different peoples and cultures throughout Taladas. As that rulebook says, Character Kits are not new character classes. At the core of each, the character is still basically a fighter, wizard, thief, or whatever. However, the kits allow characters, identical in class but from different cultures, to have special abilities, disabilities, and knowledge appropriate to their background.

In *Dragon Dawn*, Suldrun, the elf shaman, is modelled according to the Elf Shaman Character Kit on page 11 of "The Rule Book to Taladas," although she is female and nearly all elf shamans are male.

Dragon Dawn also introduces three new types of characters—Chyrub, a legionary of Erastas; Tekolo, a reptilian hurdu; and Tavin, a dragon knight—and Character Kits for a legionary, a hurdu, and a dragon knight are printed here. Of course, Chyrub, Tekolo, and Tavin have all advanced beyond the Character Kit templates printed below, but these kits show what they were like when they began adventuring, and what similar beginning characters will look like.

As with the kits in *Time of the Dragon*, these are guidelines, not rules. All of the characters who exactly fit these kits have brothers, sisters, cousins and friends who are similar to the kits but who differ to one degree or another.

These three kits do differ from those in "The Rule Book to Taladas" in one respect. These kits tell whether each skill is a weapon proficiency (indicated by W), a nonweapon proficiency (indicated by NW), or a language (indicated by L). A specialized weapon skill is indicated by SpW. The kits also show how many slots each skill requires. Thus, every hurdu fighter automatically receives Hunting, a nonweapon proficiency, free, so the hurdu kit lists:

Hunting (NW/0).

Most hurdu also begin with Set Snares proficiency, which fills one slot; this skill is listed as:

Set Snares (NW/1).

In addition, every character knows his native language automatically; since it doesn't fill one of the language slots, it is specially tagged, as with the hurdu's:

Hurdu (Native L/0).

Character _____ Player _____

Legionary of Erastas

Class: Fighter
Sex: Male

Race: Minotaur, Human, Dwarf, or Elf
Homeland: Minotaur League

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	BB/LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail		Spell Immun	
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base		Rctn Adj		

To be a legionary for the Minotaur League is to be part of a justifiably proud military tradition. Each legion has a particularly identifying symbol and name; within each legion are separate units, each with their own titles, traditions, and history. A legionary character will probably want to specify his legion and unit titles, as well as a short history of their most glorious triumphs.

The core of the Emperor's army is its infantry, but there are also archers, mounted scouts, and cavalry, both light and heavy.

Legionaries must specialize in two weapons (of their choice). These should be related weapons, ones with which they trained extensively for their particular role in battle. Because of the intense training received in the army, these two specializations cost just three weapon proficiency slots (not four), total.

On the other hand, it is much more difficult to learn non-military skills while in the army. Any nonweapon proficiency not directly related to warfare (Gaming, for instance, or Animal Lore), costs one additional slot. Gaming costs two slots; Mining costs three. Of course, proficiencies learned after a former legionary's service is completed cost the regular rate.

And finally, one of the best reasons for a character to enter the Legions is seen when he leaves the service. As long as the soldier receives an honorable discharge, he receives a bonus, in stl, equal to half the experience points he earned while in uniform.

Level _____

Alignment _____

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

Modifier

SAVING THROWS

_____ Paralyze/Poison ○

_____ Rod, Staff, or Wand ○

_____ Petrify/Polymorph ○

_____ Breath Weapon ○

_____ Spells ○

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

(SpW/2) (—/—) (/)

(SpW/1) (—/—) (/)

(Native L/0) (—/—) (/)

(/)

(/)

(/)

(/)

(/)

Hurdu

Class: Fighter or Cleric (Shaman) Race: Hurdu

Sex: Male or Female Homeland: The Steamwall

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	BB/LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur		Pois Save	Regen
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp		Spells/Level	Spell Immun
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus spells		Spell Fail		Spell Immun
	CHR	Max No Hench		Loy Base		Rctn Adj	

These reptilian cousins of the Bakali stand 7' to 8' tall when standing upright, but tend to walk hunched over on all fours. (Hurdu characters, when in the society of other races, fight this tendency and usually remain upright.)

Hurdu are +1 ST, +1 CN, -1 IN, and -1 CH. Because of the extreme difficulty and high skill required to track down a decent meal in the Steamwall, they receive the Hunting proficiency at no cost, and are likely to have Set Snares proficiency as well.

Hurdu are physically powerful fighters who favor weapons that they can use with two hands, taking full advantage of their reach and height to land smashing blows. In the Steamwall region they are often equipped solely with warclubs or spears; those who wander into other lands have developed a liking for two-handed battle axes and glaives.

If he does not attack with a weapon during a combat round, a hurdu can bite with his fangs, inflicting 1d6 points of damage, or lash out with his five-foot-long tail. His tail lash is a bludgeoning attack which inflicts 1d8 points of damage.

Hurdu wear armor when it is available but are comfortable without it, relying on their natural body armor for a minimal degree of protection.

Hurdu shamans worship Morgion, the evil god of disease, as Ussk, the Lord of the Steamwall. Their spells tend to emphasize the wretched consequences of life in the Steamwall—Ussk gives them major access to the Healing and Necromantic spheres (along with their reverse spells), and minor access to the Plant sphere.

Alignment _____

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

Modifier

Paralyze/Poison

Rod, Staff, or Wand

Petrify/Polymorph

Breath Weapon

Spells

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Hunting (NW/0) (-1/Wis) (/)

Set Snares (NW/1) (-1/Int) (/)

Hurdu (Native L/0) (—/—) (/)

Fire-building (NW/1) (-1/Wis) (/)

(/)

(/)

(/)

(/)

(/)

(/)

Dragon Knight

Class: Fighter or Fighter (Mage) Race: Human, Elf, or Half-Elf

Sex: Male or Female Homeland: _____

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	BB/LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur		Pois Save	Regen
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp		Spells/Level	Spell Immun
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus spells		Spell Fail		Spell Immun
	CHR	Max No Hench		Loy Base		Rctn Adj	

Dragon knights come from all classes of society, yet have two things in common—love and respect for the great winged creatures with whom they share their lives. A dragon knight has a minimum Intelligence of 12, Wisdom of 12, and Charisma of 12. Characters less intelligent, insightful, or charming than this are simply not tolerated in a long-term friendship by the Othlorx. Not even all so qualified are accepted as knights. Each applicant must find a dragon who is willing to train him and become his partner for life.

Since nearly all dragon knights began adventuring as some other type of character, most will be dual-class. Even elves and half-elves may make this switch; this is an exception to the general dual-class rule. Similarly, if a human began adventuring as a mage, he may become a dragon knight with the special ability to learn and cast wizardly spells. He will probably learn the spells his dragon knows, plus the special dragon knight spells, once he is experienced enough to do so.

Given the wide range of their background, dragon knights begin with no specific skills or proficiencies. However, as a knight advances in experience, he acquires an increasing number of abilities automatically.

The highest level of experience which dragon knights can achieve is the twelfth.

Alignment _____

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

Modifier

Paralyze/Poison

Rod, Staff, or Wand

Petrify/Polymorph

Breath Weapon

Spells

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

(/)

(/)

(/)

(/)

(/)

(/)

(/)

(/)

(/)

(/)

OPTIONAL PLAYER CHARACTERS

COBOS THE LAME

Elf, Level 7 Ranger

STR 16, INT 10, WIS 14, DEX 14, CON 15, CHA 17; AC 8; HD WA7, hp 49; #AT 3/2, Dmg by weapon (+1 for STR); AL CG; THAC0 14; HS 53%, MS 60%.

Weapon Proficiencies: composite short bow, light lance, saber, thrown dagger, javelin, mace.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: horsemanship (17), navigation (8), survival (10), tracking (16), hunting (13).

Languages: Tamire Elvish, Auric (10), Uigan (10).

Cobos wears leather mail and a small metal cap in the form of a falcon's head, the spirit totem of his clan. His padded armor is reinforced with leather at critical points (AC 8). He is equipped with four throwing javelins, a dagger, a composite short bow of layered horn, a mace and a saber +2. Cobos wears *boots of varied tracks* and has a *potion of superheroism*. As a nomadic elf of northern Hosk, Cobos' exceptional skill with the bow and on horseback are reflected in his ability roll adjustments, included in the scores above.

This fierce nomad warrior is a native of northern Hosk. Cobos left his tribe in disgrace when he lost his temper and accidentally slew an opponent he was dueling to first blood. Cobos has spent years wandering the grasslands of Hosk, selling his services to traders and merchants, and guiding the occasional party of adventurers into the steppes.

Cobos is in his early adulthood, but has finally lived long enough that he is beginning to long for home and family, the roots he has eschewed for so long. He believes that if he proves his worthiness and atones for his earlier dishonor, his clan will have no choice but to take him back. The unlikelihood of this is evident to all but Cobos himself. The elf is fierce, arrogant, proud and stubborn. He is easily angered and quick to fight, and loves foolhardy risks, which he believes prove his bravery.

Cobos is 5' 5," 140 pounds, with honey-tan skin and brown-blond hair. He wears his hair in a single braid behind, with side braids by each temple. A poorly mended ankle, once broken, gives him an awkward limp and is the source of his nickname.

HARLIN REIVER

Half-Elf, Level 6 Fighter

STR 10, INT 14, WIS 12, DEX 17, CON 13, CHA 7; AC 1; HD WA6, hp 36; AL CG; THAC0 15.

Weapon Proficiencies: long bow (specialized), short sword, hand axe, halberd, sling

Nonweapon Proficiencies: blind fighting, bowyer/fletcher (16), dancing (17), charioteering (19).

Languages: Thenolian, Auric (14), Hoor (14), Kothian (14).

Harlin wears *chain mail* +1. He is equipped with a long bow and 10 +1 arrows, a short sword, a hand axe and a sling. Harlin wears a *ring of free action* on his left hand, and carries a *rope of climbing* in his pack.

Harlin is a Thenolite. He is in his mid-30s, standing tall and straight-limbed, with straight red-brown hair and squinting brown eyes. This fighter is the cast-off bastard son of a Thenol lord, denied by his family because of the embarrassment his existence would bring their political marriage ties. Resentful

of his circumstances, Harlin left Thenol when he was threatened with conscription as a common soldier.

For the past several years he has made a living as an arena fighter in Kristophan in the Minotaur League, where he learned to drive a chariot and fight blind. In spite of his arena experience, Harlin considers himself an accomplished bowman, and uses the long bow as his weapon of preference.

This fighter is constantly gambling away his earnings, for he loves gaming but is not highly skilled at it. Harlin is unreligious, with no interest in Bishop Trandamere, internal Thenolite cults or political affairs. He is reluctant to speak of his homeland to others, and angrily overreacts to anti-Thenolite comments.

Harlin is evasive about his personal history. He is especially fond of the entertainments to be found in taverns, but is otherwise content with life and lives in harmony with himself. He is unflappably calm in the midst of hectic events, and is most comfortable following rather than giving orders.

THE DRAGON HUNTERS

The following NPCs are the dragon hunters sought by the player characters throughout this adventure. It is important for the DM to be thoroughly familiar with these characters before play commences, in order to understand the rationale behind their actions. This enables the DM to role-play them convincingly, and to improvise in character if PCs take unexpected actions during the adventure.

Anishta and her party are intended to be a tough challenge for the player characters to surmount. Composition of Anishta's party can be adjusted as necessary to accomplish this. If the PC group is weaker, NPC hit points may be reduced or lesser NPCs dropped from encounters. If the PC party is stronger, increase hit points, or supplement Anishta's forces with more draconians or ogres, detailed below.

ANISHTA

Female Human, Level 7 Cleric (priestess of Hith)

STR 13, INT 13, WIS 17, DEX 17, CON 10, CHA 12; AC -1; MV 12; HD P7, hp 43; AL LE; THAC0 16.

Weapon Proficiencies: flail, horseman's flail, mace.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: horsemanship (20), animal handling (16), ancient history (12), weather sense (16), hunting (16).

Languages: Thenolian, Auric (13), Sesk (13).

Spells (5/5/3/1):

1st: *bless*, *detect good*, *command*, *cure light wounds*, *protection from good*

2nd: *enthrall*, *silence 15'*, *wyvern watch*, *spiritual hammer*, *obscurement*

3rd: *animate dead (x2)*, *feign death*

4th: *spell immunity*

Anishta wears *splint mail* +2. She wields a *mace* +2, engraved with the symbol of Hith. This weapon, called Shadowcaster, can *create darkness* in a 15' radius once per day. Whoever holds the weapon is unaffected by the magical darkness, and can see normally within that area of effect. In addition, the priestess has an *iridescent spindle ioun stone* which sustains her without breathing. She uses this to protect against the breath attacks of certain dragons. Anishta has a scroll which contained several *pass without trace* and *hallucinatory terrain* spells; two each remain on the scroll.

Anishta comes from Thenol, where local politics thwarted her efforts to rise upward in Bishop Trandemere's temple hierarchy. She hunts dragons for the rich bounty which is offered, and the chance to collect dragon treasure. She plans to use this wealth to fund her political aspirations in Thenol.



Although Anishta is an accomplished huntress, the priestess prefers city life and begrudges the time she must spend in the wilderness to achieve her goals. She regards dragon hunting as a time-consuming chore which nevertheless offers a quick route to wealth. Anishta executes this task as efficiently as possible in order to minimize the time spent away from the comforts of civilization.

Anishta is superstitious and carries a number of talismans and amulets. She has the wide staring eyes of a fanatic, a self-assured air and carriage which leaves others little room to question or doubt her judgement. Even when she is uncertain what to do she doesn't let on; she makes a snap judgement and launches into the plan of action with all the authority she can muster. Anishta is strong-willed; she gives in to no one and reasoned argument makes her set in her heels and pursue her original intent all the harder. However, reverse psychology works like a charm: Anishta can be persuaded to do something by a person offering resistance to the idea.

Anishta is 5' 10" tall, with black hair, brown eyes, and lightly tanned skin. She uses her height to intimidate others. She is not afraid of physical confrontation. Anishta is an accomplished liar and will use in any way necessary to get out of a tight spot.

TEKOLO

Hurdu, Level 6 Fighter

STR 18/82, INT 9, WIS 11, DEX 12, CON 16, CHA 8; AC 6; MV 12; HD WA6, hp 45; Dmg by weapon (+4 for STR); Size L (7"); AL NE; THACO 13 (includes STR +2).

Weapon Proficiencies: sling, warhammer (specialized: 3/2), dagger, spear (specialized: 3/2).

Nonweapon Proficiencies: hunting (10), set snares (11), endurance (16), mountaineering.

Languages: Hurdu, Thenolian (9).

Tekolo wears no armor. He carries a *war hammer* +2, dagger, sling, and spear. Around his neck he wears a *good luck* talisman of bone and feathers, which will bestow a +1 modifier to his next three saving throws (after that the talisman is exhausted and no longer effective). This warrior wears a golden arm band on his left biceps; it is a *phylactery of pure water* (XP 1,000), enabling the wearer to *purify water* as the 1st-level priest spell *purify food and drink*. The device holds 23 charges. It is a common magical item among the hurdu, who live among the oft-tainted waters of the Steamwall.

Tekolo is a hurdu, of the lizard-like race of humanoids that inhabit the western slopes of the Steamwall region. He dislikes dwarves and hobgoblins, whom his people frequently raid; nor is he particularly fond of humans, whom he considers frail and effete. However, Tekolo holds shamans and clerical spellcasters in great respect, and it is this awe that causes him to bow to Anishta's commands and cooperate with Kohver.

Tekolo is an accomplished fighter, making up in brute strength what he lacks in refined fighting style. He is valued in this party of dragon hunters because he is a skilled hunter of dragons, which he knows from the Steamwall region where they are more common. When on the trail of dragons, Tekolo's hunting skill is raised by +4 to a score of 16.

Tekolo is reserved and slow to anger, pursuing his goals with singleminded intensity. His brutality is unthinking, the natural result of a coarse nature rather than calculated cruelty.

The lizard man stands nearly 7' tall, weighs 350 pounds, and has a natural armor class of 6 due to his thick, scaled hide. If necessary he can bite with his fangs, inflicting 1d6 points of damage. If he does not attack with a weapon during a combat round, Tekolo may instead lash out with his five-foot-long tail. This is a bludgeoning attack inflicting 1d8 points of damage.



POLLIP

Female Dwarf, Level 6 Thief
STR 14, INT 11, WIS 11, DEX 17, CON 13, CHA 12; AC 2; HD R6, hp 24; AL LE; THAC0 18.

Weapon Proficiencies: dagger, staff, short sword.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: appraising (11), set snares (16), mining (8).

Languages: Scorned Dwarvish, Thenolian (11), Auric (11).

Thief Abilities: PP 50%, OL 55%, FRT 60%, MS 60%, HS 25%, DN 15%, CW 65%, RL 10%.

Pollip wears *studded leather armor +1* and carries a wooden shield. She carries *oil of etherealness* and a small *bag of holding* in which she has collected 2,000 stl worth of gemstones and jewelry from dragon hoards. In addition, the thief has been stashing bits of dragon treasure along the way, and keeps a map marking these locations in her bag.

Pollip is one of the Scorned Dwarves, but has long been outcast from her people for her thievery. Over the last few decades she has led a moderately successful career as a highwayman far from her home. After her last band was captured by the League, Pollip decided it was time to lie low for a while. She has taken up dragon hunting for the cash rewards and the chance it offers to stay away from the law.

This dwarf is a pugnacious and foul-mouthed complainer. She is annoyingly selfish and greedy, always wanting the bigger piece of pie, the best bed, the greatest share of treasure. Her thievery is confined to poking around a lair after the obvious dangers have been removed by others.

In spite of these quirks, Pollip's bravery in combat is unquestionable. She is never daunted by strange sights or fearsome monsters. She is content to follow Anishta's leadership as long as the group makes good bounty money.

KOHVER

Half-ogre, Level 5 Cleric (Ogre Shaman)
STR 17, INT 12, WIS 12, DEX 8, CON 15, CHA 7; AC 3; MV 12; HD P5, hp 40; Dmg by weapon (+1 for STR); AL NE; THAC0 17 (includes STR +1).

Weapon Proficiencies: club, warhammer, spear.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: herbalism (10), direction sense (13), weather sense (11), leatherworking (12).

Languages: Abaquan, Thenolian (12), Sesk (12), Auric (12).

Spells (3/3/1):

1st: *invisibility to animals*, *endure heat*, *entangle*

2nd: *resist fire*, *charm person*, *speak with animals*

3rd: *summon insects*

Kohver wears *banded mail +1* festooned with feathers, fur, and claws for magical protection (AC 3). He shuns a shield, preferring to wield his weapons two-handed. Kohver wears a *cloak of elvenkind* once taken from a sacrificial victim, and wears a *ring of water breathing*.

Kohver is a native of the Conquered Lands. Ostracized by both humans and ogres, he has created a niche for himself in the worship of obscure nature spirits related to the pantheon of the ogres. This self-appointed shaman is Anishta's second-in-command because of his proven abilities in the field, although Anishta is unhappy with his religious beliefs.

Kohver has very much stumbled into his own religion, creating rituals and forging ceremonies as he goes. He improvises freely and the results of his spells, bestowed by Gorth, a lesser demigod, are not always predictable. There is a 10% chance for each spell cast that one of its elements (range, duration, area of effect) is either greater or lesser than normal (50% chance either way). The element affected is randomly determined by the DM.

Kohver has a malicious sense of humor and little patience for insubordination or people who irritate him. He keeps his own council and offers surprisingly good tactical advice for ways to approach dragons. Kohver is responsible for directing the ogres and draconians in Anishta's group, keeping them in control with his force of personality and intelligence.

The shaman stands 6' 5" tall and weighs 260 pounds. He has the slightly hunched posture of his ogrish kin, as well as the massive, powerfully muscled torso common to that race. His lank black hair is worn in a single long braid in back.

DAGOBERT

Elf, Level 5 Mage/Level 5 Fighter (Multi-Class)
STR 14, INT 17, WIS 11, DEX 12, CON 16, CHA 8; AC 4; MV 12; HD WZ5/WA5, hp 27; AL CE; THAC0 16.

Weapon Proficiencies: short bow, long sword (specialized), staff, thrown dagger.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: navigation (15), reading/writing (18), ancient languages (17), ancient history (16), horsemanship (14).

Languages: Hoor, Thenolian (17), Ancient Elvish (17).

Spells (4/2/1):

1st: *burning hands*, *magic missile*, *grease*, *sleep*

2nd: *blindness*, *stinking cloud*

3rd: *lightning bolt*

Dagobert wears no armor, preferring finely embroidered tunic and hose. His calling as a wizard-warrior is not evident from his appearance. Dagobert wears a gold torc which acts as a *torc of defense* (same effect as *bracers of AC 4*). He is armed with a short bow, dagger, and *longsword +2*; in addition to regular arrows and 4 *arrows +2*, Dagobert has an *arrow of location* which he uses to pinpoint dragons.

Dagobert is an insolent, proud elf of Armach descent. He is unpredictable in his behavior, for though he maintains a veneer of collected coolness, his temper is constantly boiling beneath the surface. Dagobert wears a perpetual frown and constantly worries things with his fingers, twisting cloth, snapping twigs, and so on. This nervous energy is mostly internalized; he sleeps little, studies his magic for long hours, and plots revenge for slights the rest of his time.

Dagobert has joined the dragon hunters for two purposes. Beside the obvious lure of wealth and dragon treasure, he is hoping to learn the secret of dragon magic and collect unique spells which will serve him later. He had visions of coercing a dragon to tell him these things and promising to save its life afterward. So far, though, Anishta's people have taken dragons effectively by surprise, leaving Dagobert no opportunity to extort knowledge from their victims. The elf has become increasingly furious about this, although he has not let on. Dagobert will gladly help a dragon turn on his companions, if he thinks he can benefit greatly in knowledge in return for his treachery. The rest of the party does not quite realize exactly what a wild card their elvish fighter is.

Dagobert is thinner and more nervous of build than other elves. He lets no one else touch his *arrow of direction* and is similarly possessive about all his other belongings.

Ogres (5): AC 5; MV 9; HD 4+1, hp 20, 19, 17, 18, 21; #AT 1, Dmg 1d10 + 2 (using club, with STR bonus); Size L; Morale 11; AL CE; THAC0 17.

Sesk Draconians (3): AC 6; MV 9; HD 2, hp 11, 10, 12; #AT 2 or 1, Dmg 1d4/1d4 or by weapon; Size M (5'); Morale 11; AL NE; THAC0 18 (claws), 19 (with weapon).

Each draconian has a light crossbow and a short sword. They are more completely described on the next page.

Draconian, Sesk

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Temperate plain or forest
FREQUENCY: Very Rare
ORGANIZATION: Tribal
ACTIVITY CYCLE: Day
DIET: Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE: Average (8-11)
TREASURE: None
ALIGNMENT: Neutral evil

NO. APPEARING: 2d6
ARMOR CLASS: 6
MOVEMENT: 9
HIT DICE: 2
THACO: 18
NO. OF ATTACKS: 2 or 1
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d4/1d4 (claw/claw) or by weapon
SPECIAL ATTACKS: +1 to hit with claws
SPECIAL DEFENSES: None
MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil
SIZE: M (4'-5' tall)
MORALE: 11
XP VALUE: 100
Chieftain: 150



The sesk are remnants of the early experiments to create draconians. Somewhat shorter than the average draconian, they stand with a hunched posture as if favoring a cramped limb. Their bodies are twisted and appear to be out of proportion to their general build. A reptilian jaw and brow, vestigial tail, and silver-hued scales hint at the origin of these malformed draconians.

COMBAT: Sesk draconians are poor fighters, hampered not so much by will as by the physical limitations of their misshapen bodies. When combat is inevitable, they prefer to attack from ambush or places of concealment, employing missile weapons that give them an advantage while keeping them out of melee range. Crossbows are forgiving of the sesk's lack of dexterity, and are the weapon favored by these draconians. In close quarters they use the short sword, which does not require much brute strength.

The sesk avoid combat whenever possible, relying on cunning and treachery to achieve their ends instead. They are accomplished builders of snares and traps, and prefer to catch their prey with stealth rather than an outright attack.

If forced into battle they are competent fighters, but do not do combat with the bloodthirstiness of some other draconians. If close pressed, the sesk drop their weapons and resort to the use of claws. This is a reaction of panic, for their claws are less useful than many weapons; nevertheless, a sesk forced to fight with its natural weaponry gains +1 to hit for the fervor of its defense.

When slain, the sesk appear to shrink in upon themselves, dehydrating and turning to fine silvery dust in a single round.

HABITAT/SOCIETY: The sesk were one of the experiments in draconian creation that the evil lords abandoned early on. Created from the eggs of silver dragons, their masters found the sesk were smarter than the average draconian, with a cleverness and

cunning far beyond that of their peers. Yet their bodies were oddly twisted, as if silver dragon blood rebelled at this unwonted usage. The sesk were incapable of fighting as well as the evil lords had hoped, and proved far too creative and questioning of authority to swiftly and unquestionably follow orders.

Since these twisted vessels were patently unsuitable for their ends, the evil lords abandoned their experiment and banished the sesk to the wilderness of the Conquered Lands. The sesk migrated eastward until the peoples of the Steamwall region prevented their further advance. There the sesk have curried favor with the hurdu, living in ruins shunned by those lizard men, and aiding them in their battles with the hobgoblins who vie with the hurdu for dominance in the foothills.

Sesk live in villages organized loosely along tribal lines, near and sometimes among the hurdu clans with whom they closely associate. Each tribe numbers from 20-80 sesk (2d4 x 10), and is led by a chieftain (4 HD, THACO 16, Dmg 1d6/1d6).

ECOLOGY: The carnivorous sesk successfully trap most of what they eat. They often trade foodstuffs with the hurdu, but when ranging away from home are self-sufficient in the wilderness. As long as it is freshly killed, they are not picky about the flesh they eat, and will consume anything from field mice to humans when hungry. When fed until full, a sesk can then go for the space of a few days without eating.

The sesk preference for trapping and catching their food compels them to set up snares and wait at least a day for them to capture food. For this reason, sesk move into an area, stay for one or more days collecting food, then travel without stopping while fueled by their bodies' reserves.

When generating statistics for significant sesk, these draconians are -1 STR, -1 DEX, and +2 INT. Sesk have the Set Snares proficiency.

Hurdu

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Temperate or tropical forest, mountains
FREQUENCY: Rare
ORGANIZATION: Tribal
ACTIVITY CYCLE: Day
DIET: Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE: Average (8-11)
TREASURE: None
ALIGNMENT: Lawful evil

NO. APPEARING: 3d6
ARMOR CLASS: 6
MOVEMENT: 12
HIT DICE: 2
THAC0: 18
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d6, 1d8, or by weapon
SPECIAL ATTACKS: None
SPECIAL DEFENSES: None
MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil
SIZE: L (7'-8' tall)
MORALE: 14
XP VALUE: 100
Chieftain: 250

COMBAT: Hurdu are physically powerful fighters who favor weapons that they can use with two hands, taking full advantage of their reach and height to land smashing blows. In the Steamwall region they are often equipped solely with warclubs or spears; those who wander into other lands have developed a liking for two-handed battle axes and glaives.

However, even without weapons a hurdu is not unarmed. If necessary he can bite with his fangs, inflicting 1d6 points of damage. If he does not attack with a weapon during a combat round, he may instead lash out with his five-foot-long tail. This is a bludgeoning attack inflicting 1d8 points of damage.

Hurdu wear armor when it is available but are comfortable without it, relying on their natural body armor for a minimal degree of protection. They fight well as a unit, with those of lesser rank unquestioningly following the instructions of their leader. Left to their own, hurdu are good tactical fighters. Operating with the advice of a sesk draconian, a hurdu raid party leader is capable of inspired sneak attacks and treacherous strategic moves.

HABITAT/SOCIETY: Hurdu are cousins of the bakali, the lizard men of Blackwater Glade whose ancestors once roamed all the waterways of Taladas. These lizard men have taken on the aspect of other twisted, vicious things which live in the tortured Steamwall region. Those in the Steamwall Mountains live along the less poisoned waterways in small villages of 20 to 30 individuals.

Hurdu society is much like that of the bakali of Blackwater Glade. The lizard men live in tribes organized along a strict basis of dominance. The strongest holds firm rule; all others obey his command. Unlike their more passive swampland cousins, however, hurdu are given to violent rages and displays of brutish



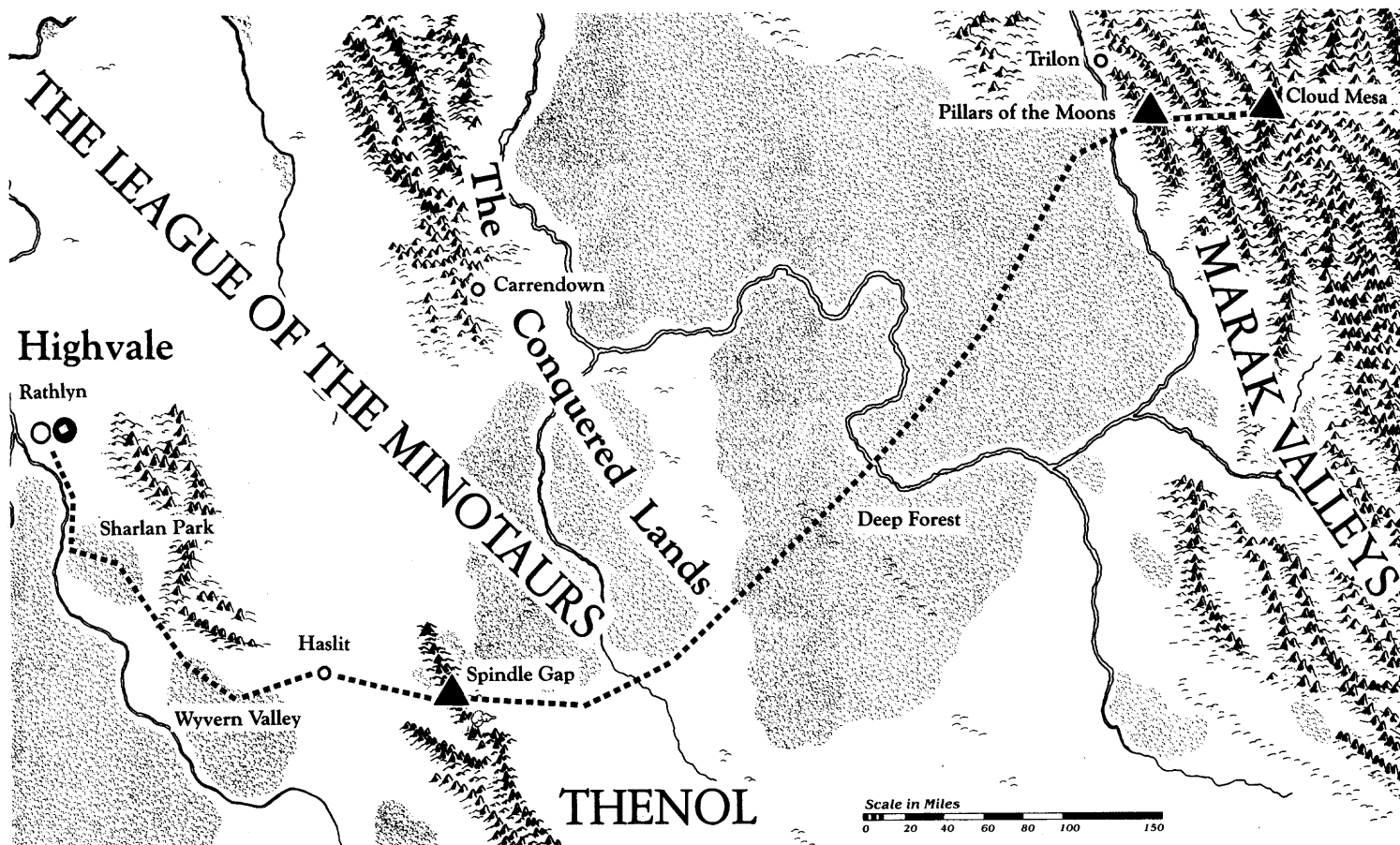
atrocities. They commonly torture prisoners, and show no mercy or sympathy to the weak or ailing.

They are fewer in numbers than bakali; though more hardy in their physical attributes, they do not live as long as a result of poisons in the Steamwall environment. Hurdu hunt, trade with sesk draconians, and compete with hobgoblins for living space in the Steamwall region. They despise kender, who sometimes clash with their hunting parties, and avoid the dwarves of the high mountain peaks, who usually best them in combat.

Food is more difficult to find in the poisoned Steamwall mountains than in the southern swamplands, so hurdu are forced to hunt with frequency and skill. It is these forays which bring them most often into conflict with hobgoblins and other mountain inhabitants. Hurdu expect an accomplished warrior to be an accomplished hunter as well, and scorn those who are not. A male who cannot gain dominance in his tribe often leaves and travels far afield, gaining experience and fighting prowess so he can eventually return and successfully challenge his fellows for position and rank.

ECOLOGY: Hurdu are cold-blooded reptilians. They prefer to live in hot climates and are most active during the daytime, when they hunt and conduct most of the business of daily life. They stand seven to eight feet tall when standing upright, but tend to walk hunched over on all fours. Their alligator-like skin is yellow-green to orange-yellow in color, a natural camouflage which permits them to blend into the ill-favored foliage of the Steamwall Mountains.

When generating statistics for significant hurdu characters, these lizard men are +1 ST, +1 CN, -1 IN and -1 CH. They are predominantly fighters, although some are shamans dedicated to Ussk (Morgion). All male hurdu start with Hunting proficiency.



powerfully muscled torso common to that race. His lank black hair is worn in a single long braid in back.

Dagobert (Elf, Level 5 Mage/Level 5 Fighter (Multi-Class))
ST 14, IN 17, WS 11, DX 12, CN 16, CH 8; AC 4; MV 12; HD WZ5/
WA5, hp 27; AL CE; THAC0 16.

Weapon Proficiencies: short bow, long sword (specialized), staff, thrown dagger.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: navigation (15), reading/writing (18), ancient languages (17), ancient history (16), horsemanship (14).

Languages: Hoor, Thenolian (17), Ancient Elvish (17).

Spells (4/2/1):

1st: *burning hands*, *magic missile*, *grease*, *sleep*

2nd: *blindness*, *stinking cloud*

3rd: *lightning bolt*

Dagobert wears no armor, preferring finely embroidered tunic and hose. His calling as a wizard-warrior is not evident from his appearance. Dagobert wears a gold torc which acts as a *torc of defense* (same effect as *bracers of AC 4*). He is armed with a short bow, dagger, and *long sword +2*; in addition to regular arrows and 4 *arrows +2*, Dagobert has an *arrow of location* which he uses to pinpoint dragons.

Sesk Draconians (3): AC 6; MV 9; HD 2, hp 11, 10, 12; #AT 2 or 1, Dmg 1d4/1d4 or by weapon; Size M (5'); Morale 11; AL NE; THAC0 18 (claws), 19 (with weapon).

Each draconian has a light crossbow and a short sword. They are more completely described on p. 63.

Ogres (5): AC 5; MV 9; HD 4+1, hp 20, 19, 17, 18, 21; #AT 1, Dmg 1d10 + 2 (using club, with ST bonus); Size L; Morale 11; AL CE; THAC0 17.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Day -6 to -3. (Dragon hunters (DHs) in Sharlan Park, kill Baron Althen's three hatchlings.)

Day -1. PCs recruited by Baron's messengers.

Day 0. PCs have interview with Baron.

Day 1. PCs depart for Sharlan Park hunting lodge, arriving in the evening. (DHs arrive in Haslit.)

Day 2. PCs escorted to the lair of the slain hatchlings. Tracking begins.

Day 3. Tracking continues. PCs attacked by stirges. (DHs burn Haslit village.) PCs discover dragon hunter camp in afternoon. Eldic and Derry leave PCs to return to lodge. PCs follow tracks into Wyvern Valley. That night, Eldic is slain by ogres and Derry flees to rejoin the PCs.

Day 4. PCs continue eastward down Wyvern Valley. (DHs reach the Spindle lair, kill Narn.) PCs make camp at mouth of Wyvern Valley. Derry joins them.

Day 5. PCs reach Haslit by morning, Gap by nightfall. (DHs head east from Spindle.)

Day 6. PCs start up base of Spindle, meet Tavin and Gabus. That night, T and G fly Mies to Haslit, recruit other dragons.

Day 7. Carrendown dragons mobilized, PCs note rearguard tracks, encounter wasp nest and mud-men. (DHs kill pseudodragons; that night, they meet hulderfolk revel.)

Day 8. (DHs reach the Pillars, set up ambush.) PCs encounter hulder maze, pixies, Whitewing, and hulder revel. If they escape revel, they find DHs at the Pillars, at dawn.

8 weeks later. The night of a triple lunar conjunction. Once more near dawn, PCs escape Summerhome, meet DHs at the Pillars for climactic battle.

Palissara is a sandwoman from the Shining Lands desert wastes. Her inquisitive nature keeps her traveling among strange folk and distant lands, although she plans one day to return to the Shining Lands. Her travels have broadened her perspectives; she is easily adaptable to strange circumstances and is very difficult to offend. She is a friendly, outgoing person who is eager to speak with strangers, and quick to diffuse trouble with a joke or a song.

Palissara's appearance is all the more striking because few sandpeople are seen outside the Shining Lands. Like her kinfolk, Palissara is tall and slender, standing 5' 10" and weighing 130 pounds. Her arms are exceptionally long, with hands reaching almost to her knees. Her high cheekbones are prominent, her nose small but sharp. Palissara's skin is a deep red-brown, her eyes bright blue. Her white hair is worn tied back in a long ponytail. She is unused to armor or protective clothing of other sorts, and wears none.

Palissara naturally assumes men will treat her as an equal and considers herself their peer in all ways. The bard works constantly on expanding her repertoire of song, lore, and oral history. Palissara prefers to sleep in small enclosed spaces and becomes noticeably uneasy when weather clouds move in and she is exposed out in the open.

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Chyrub, third son of a Horned House, was quite happy as a blacksmith until the day a beautiful heifer strolled into his smithy—one look into those soft brown eyes, and he knew he was in the kind of trouble that he would never get out of. Much to his dismay, she turned out to be a princess of the Imperial Family, and the Emperor was not impressed when a blacksmith sought his daughter's hand.

To get rid of Chyrub, he sent him for a very specific bride price—a gnomoi *instant fortress*, a Thenolian *vampiric regeneration ring*, and something called a *gateway whistle* or *whistle of the planes*. With few resources of his own, Chyrub decided the best way to travel would be to join the Legions of Aragas.

It was a mistake. He served his hitch, then set off on his own. Stealing is out of the question; to compromise one's integrity, even for love, is beneath any right-thinking minotaur. He was able to acquire an *instant fortress* as thanks for a favor he recently did the gnomes; he had just left that for safe-keeping with his true love when he received Baron Rathwyck's call.

Chyrub is not overly tall for a minotaur, but his years at the forge developed even further his already massive muscles—he weighs over 380 lbs. His fur is a deep, almost shiny black. Chyrub's horns are each 26" long, and are one of his greatest sources of pride. While helping the gnomes, he stood too near a (barely) controlled explosion; all sense of taste and smell has temporarily left him. He is the epitome of the best and worst of Taladas' minotaurs: arrogant and haughty, yet fair-minded and absolutely honest.

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Buckeran is called Buckler for short, or "Bicker" by his much-put-upon companions. This Marak kender from the Steamwall region is full of gloom and doom, always foretelling ominous events and unhappy consequences. When new to this group of adventurers, the kender was at first suspicious and reserved, but over time has come to accept his companions. Now Buckler eagerly argues with them to convince them of their imminent failures. In spite of his pessimism, Buckler does his utmost to save his fellows from themselves, with the result that the kender's efforts and daring often make the difference between the party's success and failure.

Bucker is taller and more slender than a gnome, with a pointed chin, sloping nose, and straggly long hair braided in a topknot. His innate pessimism wars with a kender's natural cheerfulness, giving Buckler an expression constantly suspended halfway between worry and hopefulness. His high arched brows emphasize this dubious expression; strangers often mistake the look for a personally questioning one. Buckler refuses to talk to such people, leaving his companions to intercept irate strangers intent on pounding respect into the kender.

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Suldrun is from one of the Wolf Clans, among the vainest and most savage of all elves. From birth she proudly followed the ancient way of the Wolf—until a vision from a Bear *quoyai* changed her life. The Bear told her that her clan has no other *quoyai*, and that the shaman who pretends to guide her people is a fake; she had to flee for her life when she tried to relate that message to her people.

Now the Bear has told her that she must grow strong before returning; that when she is sufficiently powerful, she will be able to atone for her clan and drive the false shaman out.

Ever looking forward to that day, she has sacrificed much for the Bear, denying herself more than one love and an easy living elsewhere. The Bear has insisted that she not eat any female flesh, as a sign of her devotion; on those occasions when she has done so accidentally, her powers have left her until the Bear felt she was sufficiently chastened.

Suldrun is always adorned with a colorfully conspicuous elf clan wardrobe, defying those who would deny her calling, and proudly proclaiming her heritage. She often dons what seem to be a pair of bear paws while adventuring; they are actually her gauntlets. (If she has them on when she transforms into a bear, she is able to use their powers in her ursine form as well.) Beneath her bright red and black patterned tunic and cloak, she wears leather armor. What she tells no-one is that the cloak, like the gauntlets, is a gift from the Bear.

She stands 5' 4", with burnished tan skin and sleek black hair, which is tied into a bun.

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Dale began his career as a wizard, but became disenchanting with the amount of work required to become a great mage. After a workshop accident caused the loss of two fingers on his right hand, he resigned that profession to become a rogue. Dale, a dual-classed human, now uses his rogue skills to convince others he is a priest. The wizard-rogue likes the awe and special privileges accorded to magic-wielding clerics; in fact, he would actually like to be the druid he pretends he is. Dale Half-hand poses as a druid dedicated to Habbaku.

Half-hand's con game is a convincing one. If called upon to spellcast, he laments that his spells are exhausted for the day, or that he is performing penance and may not spellcast. If pressed, he creates magically-glowing auras while going through the motions of priestly mumbo-jumbo, then bemoaning the fact that his spell apparently misfired, or the target saved against its effects.

Dale's adventuring companions do not realize that he is not the druid he seems to be. He acts as a druid in all regards, and is quick to claim he has performed magic without obvious effects. For example, he may declare that he knows a person's alignment, or has just cast a bless spell on the party, enhancing this claim with *dancing lights* glowing briefly on the "blessed" targets.

Half-hand is daring and loves risks, but is unhappy about his continuing deception of partners he has come to like and respect. Yet he is fearful of confessing the truth, so for the time being he continues his ruse.

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Livia is one of the Bilo gnomes, those of the pillar country near the Shining Land. She came to the western lands on the same trading expedition that brought Palissara out of the Shining Lands. The two have traveled together for years.

Livia is stern of demeanor, with a dry sense of humor and cutting wit. She is a respected figure in the group and influential in decision making. She seldom mentions it, but Livia searches for knowledge which will help her people capture the Tower of Flame in the midst of Hitekel.

Livia is adventuresome at heart, holding herself out of fights only with an effort. The illusionist stays back to survey a situation and see how her magic can be of most assistance. Often her shouted warnings and observations (e.g., "you can flank him from the side!") have helped her comrades win the day.

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PALISSARA 5th-level Human Bard, female

STR	11	DEX	16	CON	14	AC	7	THAC0	18
INT	15	WIS	12	CHR	15	AL	NG	HP	21

Weapon Proficiencies glass darts, sling, short sword.

Nonweapon Proficiencies Shining Land history (15), reading, writing (16), gaming (15), chimeboard (musical instrument) (15), juggling (15), singing (15).

Languages Panak, Auric (15), Boli Gnomish (15).

Bard Abilities CW 90%, DN 40%, PP 30%, RL 5%.

Spells 3 1st, 1 2nd.

Special possessions Shining Lands indoors sandsuit (AC 9), outer sandsuit (in pack), obsidian darts, chimeboard (horax shell with suspended obsidian chips), *potion of healing*, *decanter of endless water*.

See back of card for more information.

CHYRUB 7th-level Minotaur Fighter, male

STR	18/20	DEX	12	CON	14	AC	3	THAC0	13
INT	16	WIS	8	CHR	11	AL	LG	HP	40

SA #A 3/2, Dmg 2d4 (butt foes over 6'), 1d4 (bite) or by weapon (+3 for ST); Size L (7' 5"); THAC0 includes +1 for ST.

Weapon Proficiencies heavy crossbow (specialized: 1/1), battle axe, hand/thrown axe, two-handed sword (specialized: 2/1).

Nonweapon proficiencies Armorer (14), weaponsmithing (13).

Languages Kothian, Auric (16).

Special possessions armor (hurdu-skin; AC 6 without it), and over-sized sword (one-handed, 2d4 (2d8 vs. L); two-handed, 3d4 (3d8 vs. L)) both of which he made.

See back of card for more information.

BUCKERAN 5th-level Kender Thief, male

STR	16	DEX	14	CON	11	AC	6	THAC0	17
INT	12	WIS	12	CHR	16	AL	NG	HP	20

Weapon Proficiencies hoopau, bo stick, dart. Listed THAC0 includes ST + 1.

Nonweapon Proficiencies juggling (13), jumping (16), ventriloquism (10), cooking (12).

Languages Marak Kender, Auric (12), Fianawar Dwarvish (12).

Thief Abilities PP 70%, OL 75%, FRT 10%, MS 35%, HS 50%, DN 20%, CW 65%, RL 0%.

Special Possessions *studded leather +1*, *dart of homing*, *potion of speed*.

See back of card for more information.

SULDRUN 6th-level Cleric (Elf Clan Shaman), female

STR	13	DEX	10	CON	12	AC	4	THAC0	18
INT	17	WIS	17	CHR	13	AL	NG	HP	29

SA able to change into a black bear at will, but suffers 1d6 damage each time she does so. As a bear, AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+3, 24 HP; Size M; #AT 3, 1d3/1d3,1d6 (claws and bite SA if a claw hits with an 18 or better, also hugs for 2d4; THAC0 17).

Weapon proficiencies lasso, sling, staff.

Nonweapon proficiencies ancient history (16), animal lore (17), elf clan history (13), singing (13), herbalism (15).

Languages Ancient Elvish, Tamire Elvish (17), Ilquar Goblin (17), Auric (17), Uigan (17), Hoor (17).

Spells 5 1st, 5 2nd, 3 3rd.

Spheres Major: All, Animal, Charm, Divination, Healing, Plant; Minor: Combat, Protection.

Special possessions *gauntlets of swimming and climbing*, colorful *cloak of protection +4*.

See back of card for more information.

DALEMONT HALF-HAND 3rd-level Human Thief Mage (Dual Class), male

STR	12	DEX	15	CON	15	AC	7	THAC0	19
INT	17	WIS	16	CHR	17	AL	NG	HP	15

Weapon Proficiencies thrown dagger, staff.

Nonweapon Proficiencies appraising (17), disguise (16), religion (16), spellcraft (15), acting (16).

Languages Auric, Kothian (17), Hoor (17), Thenolian (17).

Thief Abilities PP 20%, OL 15%, FRT 35%, MS 40%, HS 35%, DN 20%, CW 65%, RL 10%.

Spells 2 1st; 1 2nd

Special possessions druid's priestly robe which functions as a +2 *ring of protection*, *ring of mind shielding*, *philter of glibness*, *silver dagger +1*.

See back of card for more information.

LIVIA THE SHREWD 6th-level Gnome (gnomoi) Mage (Illusionist specialist), female

STR	14	DEX	16	CON	8	AC	4	THAC0	19
INT	14	WIS	8	CHR	8	AL	LG	HP	20

Weapon Proficiencies dagger, sling.

Nonweapon Proficiencies rope use (16), brewing (14), ancient history (13), engineering (11), direction sense (9)

Languages Boli Gnomish, Auric (14), Panak (14).

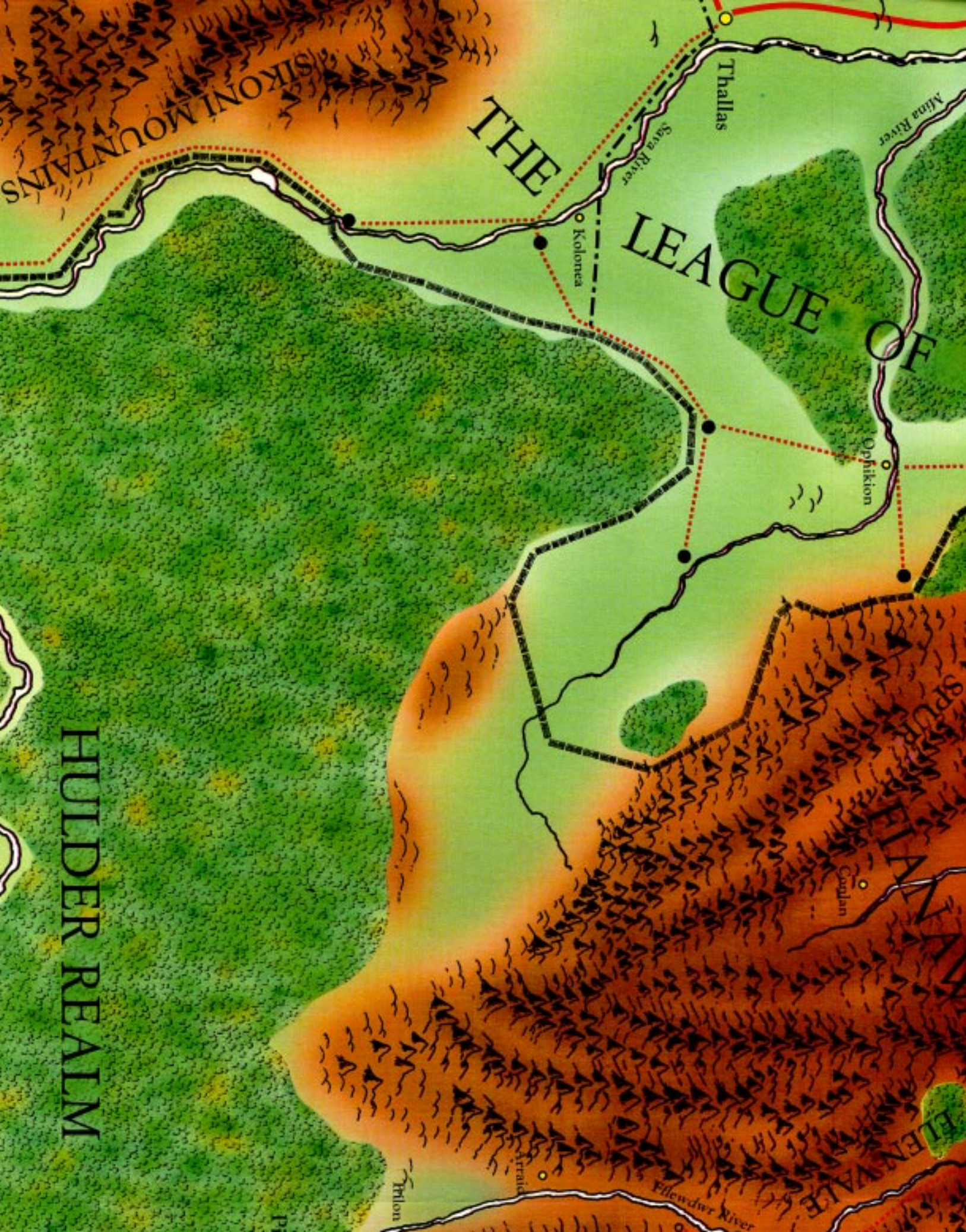
Spells 5 1st, 3 2nd, 3 3rd.

Specialist Can learn no Necromancy, Abjuration, or Invocation
Evocation spells: is +1 to save vs. Illusions; others are -1 to save vs. her Illusions.

Special Possessions *necklace of missiles*, *wand of illumination* scroll of *protection against plants*, scroll containing three 1st-level spells, bracelets which function as *bracers of defense* AC 6.

See back of card for more information.





THE LEAGUE OF

Sikonni Mountains

Thallas

Sava River

Kolonea

Alina River

Ophikion

Gynlan

Fflewdwr River

Hulder Realm

HULDER REALM

OUNTAINS

Carrendown

THENES FOREST

Theodisi Frontier

The Conquered Lands

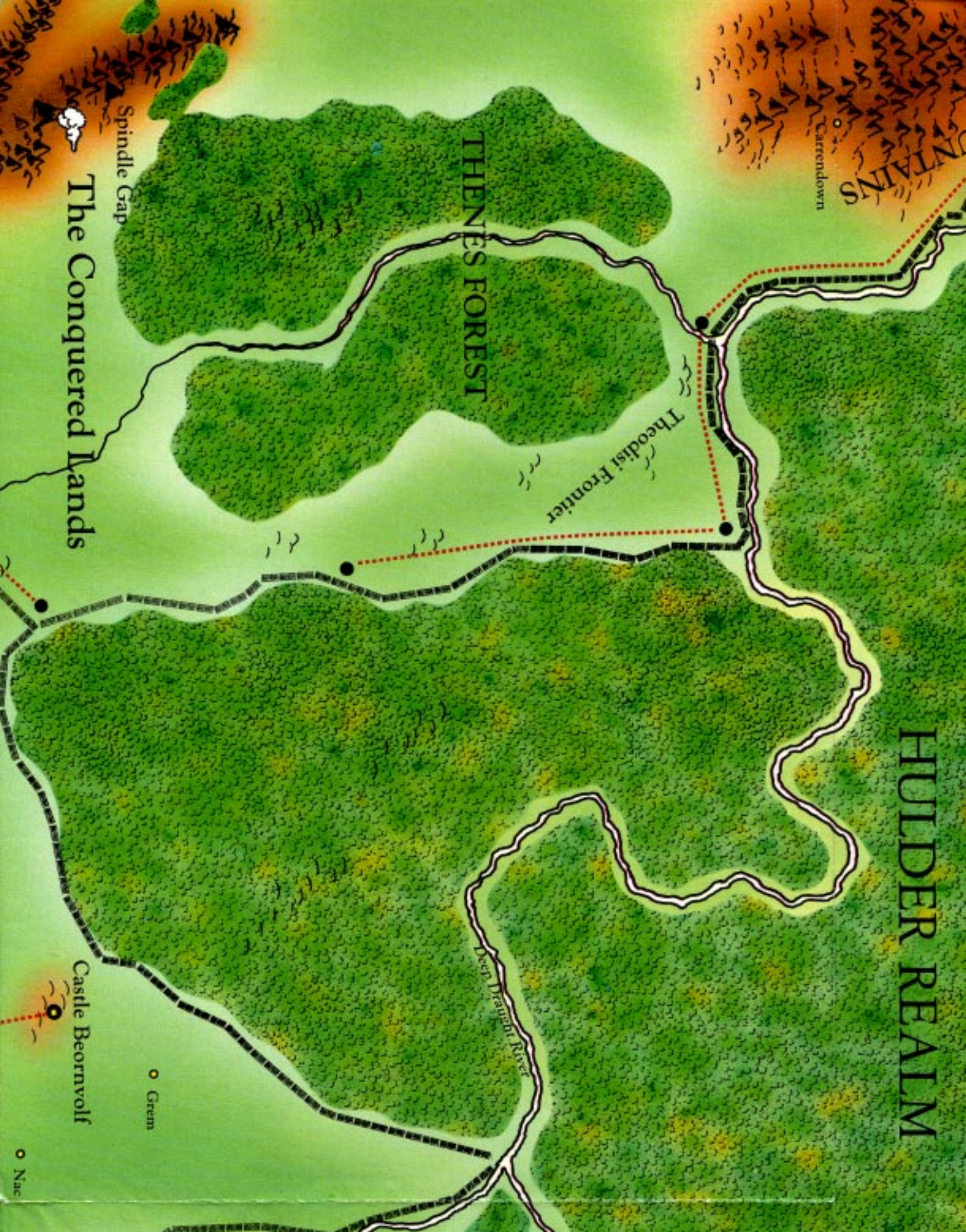
Spindle Gap

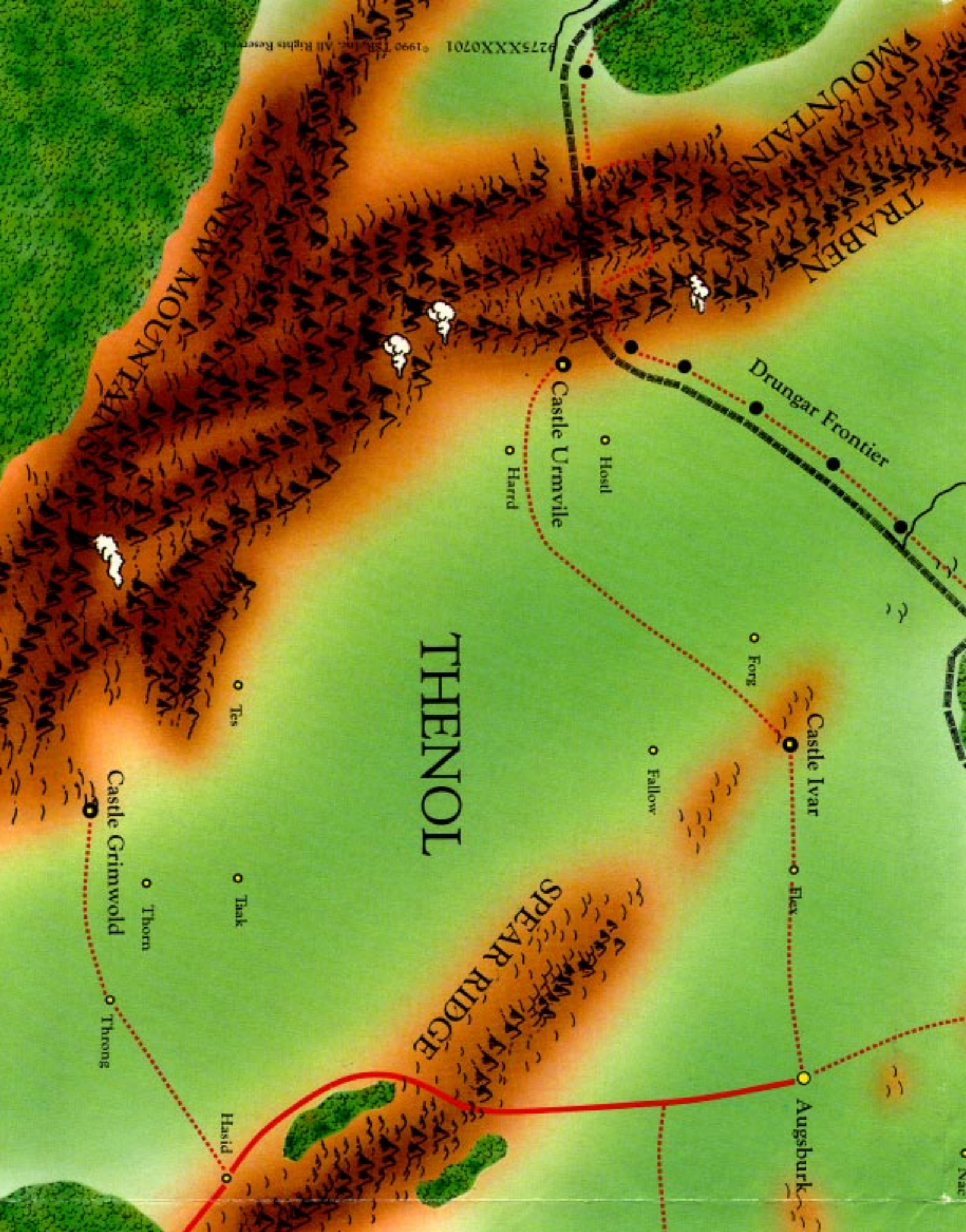
Deep Dragonn River

◉ Grem

Castle Beornvolf

◉ Nac





THENOL

TRABEN MOUNTAINS

NEW MOUNTAINS

SPEAR RIDGE

Drungar Frontier

Castle Urmville

Hosel

Harrod

Forg

Castle Ivar

Fallow

Flex

Augsburk

Tes

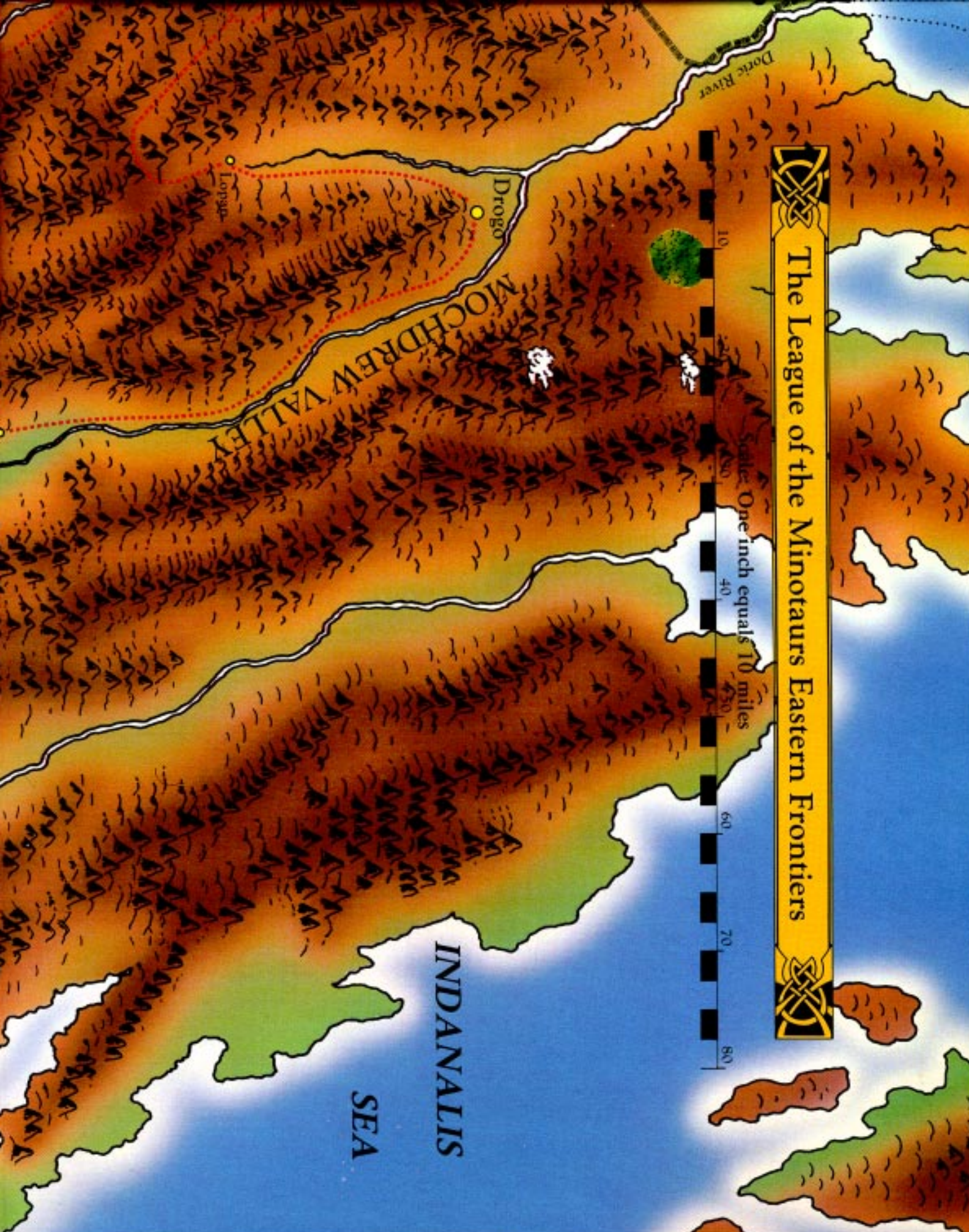
Taak

Thorn

Castle Grimwold

Throng

Hasid



The League of the Minotaurs Eastern Frontiers

Scale: One inch equals 10 miles

Doric River

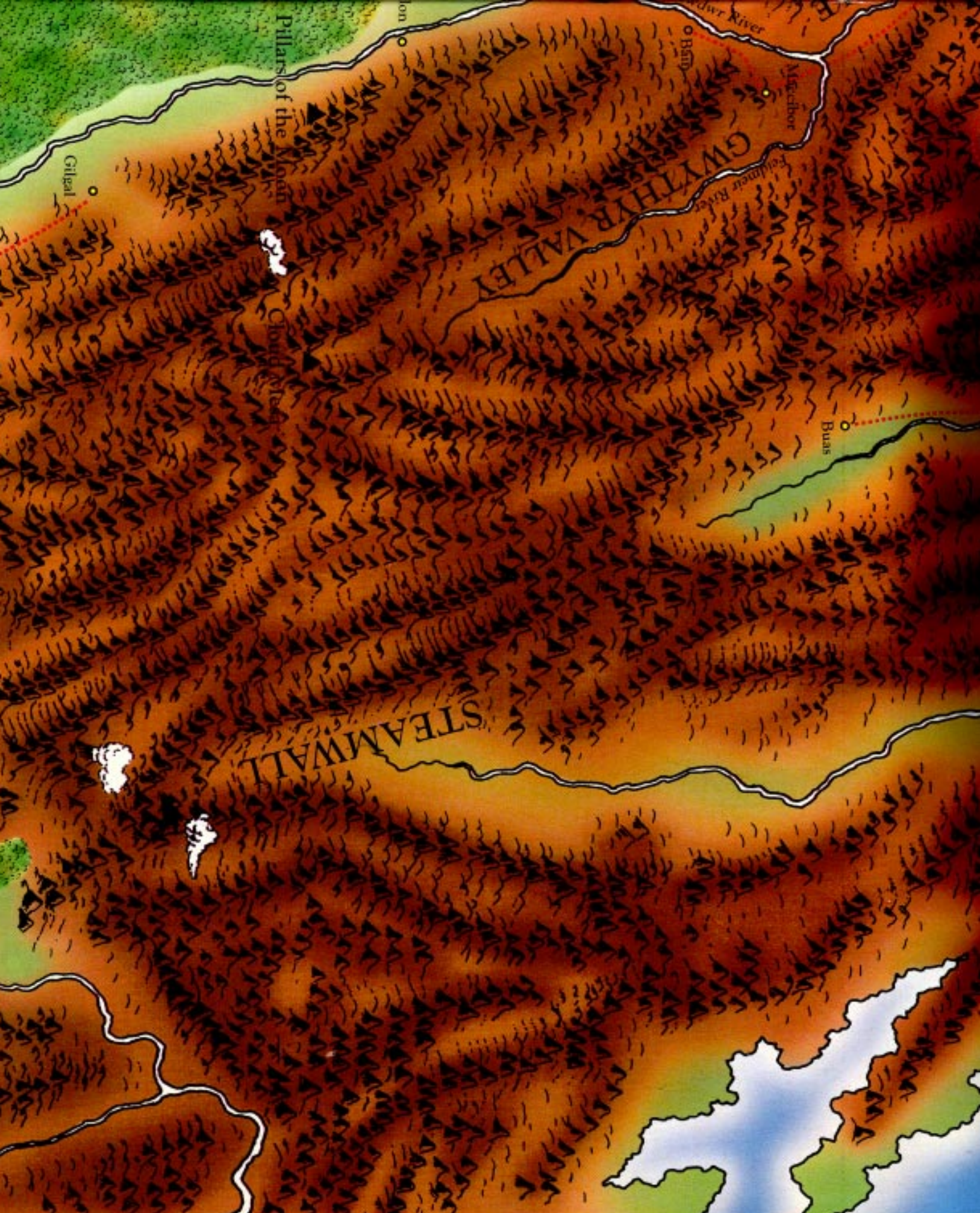
Drogo

MOCHDREW VALLEY

Lopgar

INDANALIS

SEA





Gilgal

Luneburg

Lemmo

Kenford

Maratown

Embrat

Arak

Anak

Rihwin

Lech

Wantage

Anafu Pass

Low Pass

Snowtop Pass

PUMPSBUR

MARAK VALLEYS

MOUNTAINS

Kenford River



Castle Gregor

Barrn

Bleg

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Forks

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GRIMM WOOD

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Castle Storgtall

Straa

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